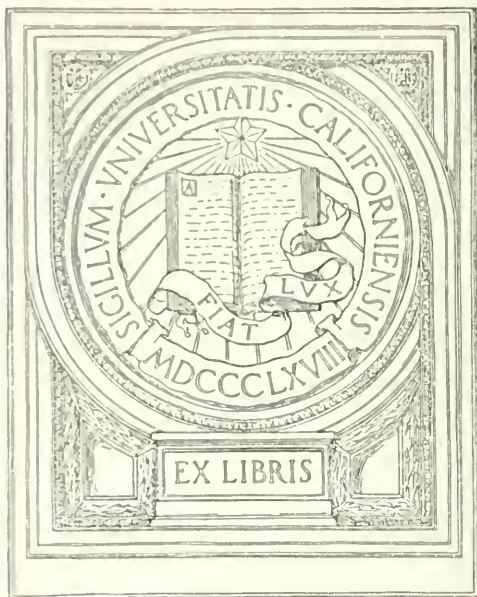




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LOUIS THE FOURTEENTH

AND

THE COURT OF FRANCE



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A FÊTE AT VERSAILLES



THE END OF THE WORLD

Louis  
the Fourteenth



The Court of France  
in the Seventeenth Century

By  
Julia Pardoe  
*et*

Volume VI

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# Louis XIV. and the Court of France in the Seventeenth Century

## CHAPTER I

League of Augsburg—Intrigue of Louvois—First Campaign of the Dauphin—Persecution of the Calvinists—Death of the Abbé de Chayla—Death of the Dauphiness—Racine's *Esther*—Proposed Marriage of the Duke of Chartres—National Apprehensions—Liberality of the Cities—Declining Influence of Louvois ; His Death.

**R**EVERT we now to the war threatened by Louvois after the adventure of Trianon.

The league of Augsburg had already been formed at the instigation of the Prince of Orange ; but although numerous rumours as regarded its purpose and extent had from time to time reached the French Court, nothing was definitely known until 1687, and Louis XIV. had made no preparations for so widely-extended and menacing a war. He was still, as we have shown, exhausting his finances in the erection of palaces, and in the acquisition of luxuries from all quarters of the globe ; and it is possible that Louvois, anxious to avoid a collision with the other European powers, while an intestine struggle was wasting the

southern provinces of the kingdom, would have devised some expedient for averting so great a peril, had not the footrule of Le Nôtre been applied to the window of the Trianon; but the ill-omened pertinacity of the King upon that occasion suddenly changed his views. He felt the necessity of self-preservation, for he saw that his influence was on the wane, and he forthwith proceeded to secure the election of the Cardinal de Furstenberg to the Archbishopric of Cologne, in opposition to the interests of Bavaria, which was the natural ally of France, conscious that by so doing he must provoke the hostilities he had lately deprecated.

This act accomplished, he continued to pursue the war in the most cruel and determined manner, deluging the whole Palatinate in flame and blood, and leaving William of Orange free to pursue his projects upon England; thence he carried it into Italy, where he treated the Duke of Savoy with so much indignity, without the cognisance of Louis XIV., that he in turn threw himself into the ranks of the general enemy; \* and with the assistance of Austria, which sent him a force of four thousand men under the command of Prince Eugène, the Duke Amédée recommenced that wild war amid mountains and ravines which was so congenial alike to the nature of his territory and the peculiarity of his genius, while the Prince forced the French to raise the siege of Coni, and the Duke of Bavaria arriving with a reinforcement, compelled them to cross the Alps.

It was on this occasion that the name of Prince Eugène became known in Paris as that of a soldier.

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.

On his return from the campaign against the Turks, he had solicited from Louis XIV. the command of a regiment, which was coldly refused; and he had then addressed a letter to the King, wherein he stated that as his Majesty rejected the proffer of his services, he was about to tender them to the Emperor of Germany. This letter afforded a theme of jest to the Monarch, who on the same evening gave it into the hands of the Marshal of Villeroy at the card-table, demanding, "Does it not strike you that I am about to sustain a great loss?" to which question the Marshal, little anticipating the annoyance to which he was subsequently to be exposed by the young Prince, answered in as light and supercilious a tone.

William of Orange still occupied Texel when the French army, amounting to a hundred thousand men, were marched upon Germany, under the command of the Dauphin, who, on this occasion, made his first campaign; and in default of Condé, now in his grave, and of Créqui, who had also died in the course of the preceding year, Henri de Durfort, Marshal of Duras,\* was appointed second in command, the Generals Cat-

\* James Henri de Durfort, Duke of Duras was the descendant of a noble family of Guyenne, and the nephew of Turenne, and was appointed Governor of Franche-Comté, and Marshal of France in 1675. After commanding the army in Germany, he was named Captain of the Body-Guard, and died in 1704. His estate of Duras was erected into a duchy in 1685. His son became also a Marshal of France, and was appointed to the command of the National Guard at the commencement of the revolution. His grandson, who was first gentleman of the King's chamber, was compelled to fly his country in order to save his life. He returned, however, under Bonaparte, and was appointed by Louis XVIII., Adjutant-General and Peer of France. His wife, who was the daughter of the Count of Kersaint, was celebrated by her novels of *Aurika* and *Edward*.

inat \* and Vauban, and several others of less repute, serving under his orders. The Dauphin had, at this period, attained his twenty-seventh year; and as this was the first occasion upon which he had been permitted to assert himself as the heir of a great kingdom, he received the command with a joy which he did not attempt to disguise. At the moment of his departure, when he was about to take leave of his Royal father in the presence of the whole Court, Louis XIV. thus addressed him:

“ My son, in thus sending you to command my troops, I afford to you an opportunity of making known your value. Go, then, and show it to the whole of Europe, in order that when I shall be no more none may be able to perceive that the King is dead.”

The Prince received a special commission to command, as though he had been simply a general officer chosen by the Sovereign; and the letters of his Royal father were addressed, “ To my son the Dauphin, my Lieutenant-General, commanding my army in Germany.” Every precaution had, moreover, been taken to secure him from the mortification of personal failure; for although he lent his name and his presence

\* Nicholas de Catinat was born in Paris in 1637. He abandoned the bar for the army and in 1667 was appointed to a Lieutenancy in the Guards. He distinguished himself in several engagements, and on being promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General in 1688, he possessed himself of the whole of Savoy and a part of Piedmont; while in Flanders he behaved with equal gallantry. Having been appointed Marshal of France in 1693, and the war having recommenced in 1701, he was entrusted with the command of the army in Italy, against Prince Eugène, who commanded that of the Germanic Empire. He died in 1712.



to the expedition, Marshal Duras really commanded the troops; Boufflers\* was at the head of a body of men on the French bank of the Rhine, and the Marshal of Humières at that of another in the direction of Cologne. Heidelberg and Mayence were soon taken; and the siege of Philipsbourg, always a necessary prelude whenever France declared war against Germany, was commenced, under the direction of Vauban. The Dauphin joined the army on the sixth day after the opening of the trenches, and, brave without temerity, affable to those by whom he was approached, and liberal and indulgent to the troops, he soon gained the affection of the whole army. Philipsbourg was taken, after a resistance of nineteen days; Manheim only held out during four; Franckendal surrendered in two; while Spire, Trèves, Worms, and Oppenheim opened their gates without a struggle.

Such was the progress of the French arms when the famous order, signed by Louvois, reached the Royal camp, that the Palatinate was to be reduced to cinders, and the whole face of the country turned into a desert. There was no possibility of resisting the command, iniquitous and impolitic as it was; and, accordingly, the French generals, in the very heart of the winter, announced to the citizens in their flourishing and handsome towns, to the inhabitants of the villages, and to the owners of more than fifty stately castles, that they must forthwith quit their dwellings, which were

\* Louis Francis, Duke of Boufflers, and Marshal of France, afterwards immortalised himself by the defence of Lille in 1708, and contributed greatly to the success of several engagements. He died in 1711, and it was said of him that *his heart died the last*.



about to become the prey of the flames. Men, women, and children consequently found themselves houseless ; and while one portion of these unhappy victims of cruelty and ambition were wandering over the country in search of shelter, and others were escaping to find an asylum in exile, the troops, who, on such occasions, excited by the destruction of their own hands, invariably exceed the orders of their superiors, burned and pillaged the whole face of the country. Manheim, the residence of the electors, fell first ; its palaces were destroyed, and the dwellings of its citizens lay in one ruined heap around them ; its tombs were desecrated by the rapacity of the soldiery, who anticipated that they contained treasure, and the ashes which they had so long enshrined were scattered to the winds of heaven.

So long as Colbert lived, Louis XIV. had never openly persecuted the Protestants, for that great Minister had succeeded in convincing him that they were one powerful prop to the prosperity of his kingdom, and neither Madame de Maintenon nor Père la Chaise had ventured to put forth an adverse argument, for the mastery of mind on the side of Colbert was too unequivocal to admit the faintest prospect of success in such a struggle, while to every attempt made by Bossuet and Fénelon to undermine the interests of those whom they denominated " Huguenots," he contented himself by replying, " Gentlemen, you are now following the promptings of your Sorbonne conscience ; but you have another, and if you will suffer it to be heard it will argue differently."

Colbert was now, however, no more, and intolerance

and blood-thirstiness had replaced mercy and sound judgment.

This was the second occasion upon which Louis XIV. had carried destruction into the heart of this fair country ; but the flames by which Turenne had consumed two towns and twenty villages of the Palatinate were a mere bonfire beside the present conflagration. All Europe looked on in horror, and the officials by whom it was carried into execution, blushed at the enormities of which they were the agents.

Louis XIV. had authorised this cruelty in his voluptuous palace, surrounded by all the luxuries of wealth and all the consciousness of power ; his gilded apartments gave back no echo of the heart-wrung groans of a whole province, rendered destitute by his will ; his painted ceilings admitted no view of the houseless and ruined thousands to whom he had made the future one period of bitter trial. But although he could not witness the effects of his egotistical ambition, he was fated to feel their results in the hatred and execration of all the European nations, who openly condemned alike his harshness and his impolicy.

This fearful war did not, however, cause the French Monarch to forget or to neglect the pledge which he had given to James II., and it was while his troops were following up their career of victory in Germany that he equipped the fleet intended to convey an army of twenty thousand men to England, and to effect the restoration of the exiled Sovereign. The failure of this expedition, which destroyed forever the hopes of the last Stuart, was the first check that the power of Louis XIV. had ever received upon the high seas, and the

mortification was comparatively great ; while it was by the light of the flames kindled in the Palatinate that William of Orange, who had already established himself firmly upon the throne of his father-in-law, crossed the channel to attack the French troops upon the very spot where he had first opposed them. He had already proved himself no contemptible adversary, and his purpose was no sooner ascertained than it was consequently found necessary to oppose him by a general of equal talent, when the choice of the King fell upon the Marshal of Luxembourg, who, having incurred the jealousy of Louvois, as Turenne had previously done, had been for several years unemployed.

In this campaign the Marshal acquired the title of the Upholsterer of Nôtre-Dame, from the fact of his having captured at the battle of Fleurus two hundred of the enemy's standards, which he hastened to forward to the Capital ; and, during its continuance, it was rendered famous by the sieges of Mons and Namur, commanded by the King in person, and the battles of Steinkirk and Neerwinden, when the Duke of Chartres, the son of *Monsieur*, then only in his fifteenth year, commenced his military career in a manner which gave brilliant earnest of his future reputation.

But it was not only against these external wars that France had now to contend. The intestinal struggle in which she was engaged was also mining her strength. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes was bearing its fruits, and the flames of the Palatinate had extended to the Cevennes. The Abbé de Chayla had proved faithful to his principles, and had pursued the

work of proselytism with a fatal energy suited to his character. He had torn children from their parents, and shut them up in monastic houses, where they were subjected to such frightful penances, in expiation (as they were told) of the heresy of their relatives, that they had in many cases expired under their sufferings. Nor would he even afford to the dying the happiness of passing away in peace and prayer, but haunted their beds of death with prophecies of everlasting perdition should they not recant their errors and become converts to the Romish faith, and threats that after they had ceased to breathe their bodies should be dragged upon hurdles to the common sewers of the city, there to find a grave.

But as many, despite all his exertions, were discovered to have evaded his horrible denunciations, and found asylums where they could spend their last few hours of life unagonised by his fearful visitations, he proclaimed a sentence of *lèse-majesté* against all who should harbour heretics, under whatever circumstances, and thus closed many a door which would have been piously opened to their necessities.

Both within and without, the kingdom of France was like a huge vampire battenning in blood, and the archpriest, or rather archfiend, Chayla, was so conscious that his own martyrdom must inevitably follow those of his victims, that while he was ruthlessly pursuing his career of murder he was at the same time preparing his tomb in the church of St. Germain. Every day was marked by new arrests, by new tortures, or by some execution; but the individuals he persecuted the most rigorously were the alleged

prophets, whom he denounced as the fomenters of the heresy. One of these preachers was burned at Montpellier, and another was hanged; while a third, named Laquoite, who was to have been broken on the wheel, disappeared from his prison on the night preceding his intended punishment, without leaving a trace of the means by which his liberation had been accomplished.

A rumour immediately spread that, like St. Peter, he had been led invisibly from his dungeon; and ere long he reappeared, preaching a crusade against the Abbé de Chayla, whom he denounced as the Antichrist; when, all who had been the victims of the fanatic and bloodthirsty missionary, and all whom he had bereft alike of their parents and of their children, assembled beneath his banner; and under the command of a blacksmith named Laporte, and Esprit Segulier (who, after Laquoite himself, was the most revered of the twenty or thirty prophets or preachers of the Protestants), marched upon the abbey of Montvert, where Chayla had taken up his residence. They were all armed with scythes, halberds, or swords, while a few among them also carried guns and pistols.

The Abbé was in his oratory when, despite the order which he had given that he was never to be disturbed in his devotions, one of his servants rushed into the apartment to warn him that a party of fanatics were descending the mountain; but, believing it to be a mere attempt to deliver certain prisoners whom he had consigned to the dungeons of the abbey, he contented himself by desiring the officer of his guard to march out at the head of his men, and disperse the

heretics. The latter had, however, no sooner ascertained the strength of the enemy, than, instead of risking a collision, he found that he had better prepare for a defence; and, accordingly, causing the gates of the abbey to be closed, he posted his men in the rear of a barricade, hastily formed under an arch which led to the apartments of the archpriest. These preparations were scarcely terminated when the outer gate was driven in, and the reformers burst into the Court, demanded the immediate restoration of the prisoners, to which vociferous summons the Abbé replied by an order to fire upon the besiegers.

As it was obeyed, one of the reformers fell dead, and two others were grievously wounded; but this spectacle only increased the fury of their companions, who instantly precipitated themselves upon the barricade, which they, ere long, overthrew, under the directions of Laporte and Esprit Segulier; one of whom had to avenge the death of his father, and the other that of his son, both executed by order of their common enemy; whereupon the soldiers retreated for refuge to a lower hall, situated immediately beneath the chamber in which the Abbé was engaged in prayer with his followers. During the attack the Protestants had lost two of their number, and had five others wounded, when their two chiefs, fearing a further sacrifice of life, and apprehending a resistance as desperate as their own attack, proposed the release of the prisoners, and the subsequent burning of the abbey.

A portion of the besieging force accordingly set forth to discover the prisons of their co-religionists, while the remainder kept guard over the issues of the

building, to prevent the escape of its inhabitants ; nor were they long engaged in these duties, for the captives having surmised from the unusual turmoil that deliverance was at hand, shouted aloud to guide the steps of their friends to the dungeon in which they were incarcerated. The sight of these unhappy victims was well calculated to increase the frenzy of the assailants. They were, as we have elsewhere stated, six in number : three young men, and three girls of tender age, who had been apprehended in the attempt to make their escape from France. They had already passed eight days in their frightful prison, where their legs were inserted, as human wedges, between the sides of a cleft beam, the bones crushed and the limbs disabled ; their bodies swollen with agony, and their physical and mental powers alike prostrate. In this miserable state they were borne from their dungeons, amid cries of fire ! fire ! and ere many seconds had elapsed every inflammable substance of which the besiegers could avail themselves was cast into a heap, and ignited by means of a straw bed which they discovered in the guard-room.

This death-pile had no sooner begun to affect the flooring of the upper chamber than the Abbé endeavoured to escape from the window, by the assistance of his sheets, which, firmly knotted together, were secured by his attendants ; but these proving too short, he was compelled to leap the remainder of the distance, in doing which one of his legs was broken, and he barely retained sufficient strength to crawl behind a buttress, where he endeavoured to conceal himself. The attempt proved, however, unsuccessful ; for the



flames, as they gathered in volume, soon betrayed him to his enemies, who rushed towards him in a body, exclaiming, "Death to the archpriest! death to the executioner!" In vain did Esprit Segulier, who, at this awful moment, felt his vengeance yield before the frightful peril of the destined victim, shout to his followers to spare his life, in the name of that God who wills rather the repentance than the death of a sinner; they were, for the first time, deaf to his exhortations, and answered only with cries of vengeance. Segulier, however, persisted in his work of mercy; and, bestriding the body of Chayla, declared that his life should be spared if he would instantly recant his past heresies, and thenceforth devote himself to the propagation of the faith.

The Abbé answered only by a disdainful negative, and Segulier was compelled to abandon him to his fate.

The first blow which reached him was dealt by the hand of Laporte, who, as he drove his poniard to the hilt in his body, reminded him of his father whom he had consigned to the flames at Nismes. The archpriest did not utter a sound, but a stream of blood which issued from his breast proclaimed that the wound was deep and serious: the weapon was then transferred to Segulier, who, in his turn, struck, calling upon the name of his son, who had been broken on the wheel at Montpellier. Even his aim was not, however, mortal, although a second stream of blood gushed from beneath the flowing garments of the Abbé, the voice of whose murmured prayer became audibly more feeble; and then a third approached and seized the



dagger, invoking the memory of his brother, who had been put to death in chains ; and this time the steel entered the heart of the wretched man, who fell forward upon the earth, and expired.

But the work of vengeance was even then incomplete ; and as he lay, a bleeding mass before them, the weapon was passed from hand to hand ; while, as it was successively buried in his body, each who struck cursed him in the name of a martyred relative, until two and fifty stabs had almost obliterated in his remains every trace of their previous humanity.\*

After so frightful a catastrophe as this the Calvinists had no longer a hope of mercy ; and the war of extermination proceeded with various success, until the year 1704, when it was terminated by a negotiation between the Marshal of Villars and its then Chief, the celebrated Jean Cavalier.

Meanwhile the French Court had become less and less attractive. The Dauphiness had been spared the knowledge of the ruin of her country by a melancholy death ; finally attributed to the fact of her having been visited by the Princess of Conti, at the birth of the Duke of Berri, so excessively perfumed that she was unable to contend against the effect of the overcharged atmosphere. Her loss excited little regret, either in the King or her husband, who had long ceased to interest themselves in one whose secluded habits offered them neither excitement nor pleasure and she was no sooner consigned to an early grave than she was forgotten.

As we have already stated, Louis XIV. had ceased

\* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

to encourage literary talent, or to attend theatrical representations ; and it was destined to be the convent of St. Cyr which renewed the taste for intellectual pursuits. Madame de Maintenon, more and more embarrassed to discover some method of entertaining a monarch whose powers of enjoyment were visibly waning, at length bethought herself of requesting Racine, who had forsaken the stage for Port Royal and the Court, to write a sacred tragedy, which might be represented by her pupils.

The poet accordingly produced *Esther*, which has always been regarded as an allegory, wherein the triumph of Madame de Maintenon over the Marquise de Montespan was shadowed forth in that of the humble Israelite and the pious Mordecai over the haughty Vashti and the impious Haman ; and after this tragedy had been rehearsed in the convent, it was finally enacted on several occasions before the King at Versailles, in the winter of 1689, when prelates and Jesuits alike sought permission to witness so extraordinary a spectacle, in which the talent of the performers, their beauty, and their grace, proved even more attractive than the genius of the great dramatist.

Even these amusements, however, could not compensate to the King for the constant annoyance to which he was exposed by the perpetual dissensions of his three daughters, who appeared to have inherited the same feelings of rivalry that had previously existed between La Vallière and Madame de Montespan. At Marly the King and the Dauphin both dined at the same hour, and in the same apartment ; and the ladies of the Court seated themselves as they pleased at

either table, with the exception that the Princess of Conti was always at that of MONSIEGNEUR, while the two other Princesses were placed at that of the Monarch. Madame de Maintenon also dined at the latter, where she occupied a seat opposite to Louis XIV.; and on one occasion it chanced that the King, despite his usual gravity, amused himself at the close of the repast by playing at forfeits for olives with the Duchess of Bourbon, which caused her to drink several draughts of wine more than usual, the King also affecting to do the same. The Princess of Conti, whose jealousy was excited by this playfulness, could not conceal her chagrin; and when the party rose from table, as the King was passing her, he was so much displeased by the expression of her countenance that he dryly remarked that her seriousness was doubtless intended to rebuke their intemperance, after which he left the room; and he had no sooner retired than the Princess of Conti, enraged at the rebuke, made a bitter comment upon certain prolonged suppers, in which her sisters had latterly indulged; upon which Mademoiselle de Blois, in her low and languishing voice, replied by a rejoinder so stinging that the Princess was for the moment silenced.

The prolonged repasts with which the Princesses had thus been publicly taunted were, indeed, little suited either to their rank or their sex; for, when wearied by the gravity and etiquette of the Court circle, they were accustomed to celebrate a species of orgie in their own apartments, after the supper; and on one occasion, when the Dauphin had at a late hour quitted the card-table, and hearing a noise in their quarter of the pal-

ace, entered to ascertain its cause, he found them engaged in smoking, and discovered that they had borrowed their pipes from the officers of the Swiss guard. He immediately broke up the party ; but the adventure reached the ears of the King, who, on the following day, expressed his displeasure in no measured terms, to the great delight of the Princess of Conti, who thus triumphed in her turn ; but Louis XIV., wearied by these scenes of folly and recrimination, at length threatened to banish them all from the Court ; and, alarmed by the menace, peace was apparently restored.\*

The establishment of his legitimatised daughters had ever been a subject of great anxiety to the King, and having succeeded in introducing the two elder into the houses of Conti and Condé, he became desirous of marrying the third to the Duke of Chartres, his own and only nephew, who ranked above all the other Princes of the Blood ; but he remembered the comments which had been made upon the two former alliances, and was thus enabled to estimate the difficulties which must naturally attend the accomplishment of one still more startling. He was well aware also of the jealousy with which *Monsieur* insisted on all the prerogatives and privileges of his rank, and his repugnance to everything that tended to render them less absolute ; while he was equally conscious that *Madame* belonged to a nation which regarded unequal marriages with abhorrence, and was of a character well calculated to resist a measure by which she would not fail to consider her son dishonoured. Nevertheless,

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.

the resolution of the King was taken, and during the space of four years he prepared his measures to secure the success of this darling scheme.

Meanwhile Louvois, not satisfied with having burned and sacked Manheim, Worms, and Spires, proposed to Louis XIV. the destruction of Trèves also, which, as he alleged, could be easily converted by the enemy into a fortified place; but the Monarch was by this time satiated with blood, and refused to comply with the suggestion, and the Minister had no sooner quitted the room than Madame de Maintenon, arousing in favour of the Bavarians the religious scruples which she had laid to sleep during the persecutions in the Cevennes, warmly supported the resolution of the King, and expatiated upon the enormity of a vengeance which involved the innocent as well as the guilty, reminding him that although these extreme measures had emanated from the Minister, all the obloquy had hitherto fallen upon himself.

She could have advanced no other argument so powerful as this; for Louis was above all things tenacious of his perfectibility, and consequently ill constituted to bear the odium of another's acts; and thus, although he listened in silence, Madame de Maintenon felt that her point was gained.

Louvois had not insisted strongly on his iniquitous purpose when he saw the Monarch disinclined to yield; but as pertinacity was a marked feature in his character, and that he had long discovered the power of firmness over the mind of Louis XIV., who, alike from indolence and indecision, generally suffered himself to be swayed by those about him, he resolved to

maintain his position ; and accordingly, when, after the lapse of a few days, he had again transacted business in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, and was about to retire, he informed the King, while restoring his papers to his portfolio, that having been convinced, when on a former occasion he had suggested to his Majesty the burning of Trèves, that he had simply negatived a measure of such undeniable necessity from a religious scruple, he had taken the act upon his own responsibility, as well as upon his own conscience, and had despatched a courier to the seat of war, with an order for the immediate destruction of the city.

The lips of the King quivered with passion as the audacious Minister thus braved him to his face, and by a sudden impulse he seized the fire-tongs which were lying near him, and would inevitably have struck him, had not Madame de Maintenon, with great presence of mind, sprung between them, and torn the weapon from his hands.

While she was thus engaged Louvois rapidly prepared to leave the room ; but before he could reach the door, the King, still trembling with indignation, commanded him instantly to despatch a second messenger to countermand the order which he had given, adding, that should his courier arrive too late, and that a single house had fallen a prey to the flames, his head should be the forfeit of his disobedience.

The crest-fallen Minister apparently hastened to obey, but the messenger of whom he had spoken was still awaiting the issue of the conference, even Louvois himself having hesitated to incur so heavy a responsi-

bility without the Royal sanction, which he had adopted so dangerous a method to enforce; and he was consequently despatched without the fatal order, leaving the King fully persuaded that his diligence alone could insure the preservation of Trèves.\*

Ere long Louis XIV., as well as the whole of his subjects, began to entertain serious apprehensions as regarded the termination of a war which had commenced under such favourable auspices. On all sides he saw either declared enemies or doubtful allies, while his army, although sufficiently strong to sustain any ordinary hostilities, was unequal to cope with the united forces of Europe, and the new levies were raised too slowly to supply the deficiency.† The treasury, exhausted by the public buildings, and other expenses incident upon them, was so deficient that it became necessary, even at the commencement of the war, to discover some expedient by which to insure supplies; and for this purpose offices under the government were invented, which were imposed upon the most opulent of the citizens, and for which they were compelled to pay an exorbitant price. The cities also contributed largely. Toulouse set the example, by making a donation of a hundred thousand crowns; Rouen followed with the same sum; Paris tendered four hundred thousand francs, and many others contributed in the same proportion.

The King received all the deputations authorised to present these offerings with an affability and condescension which sufficiently testified their necessity,

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.

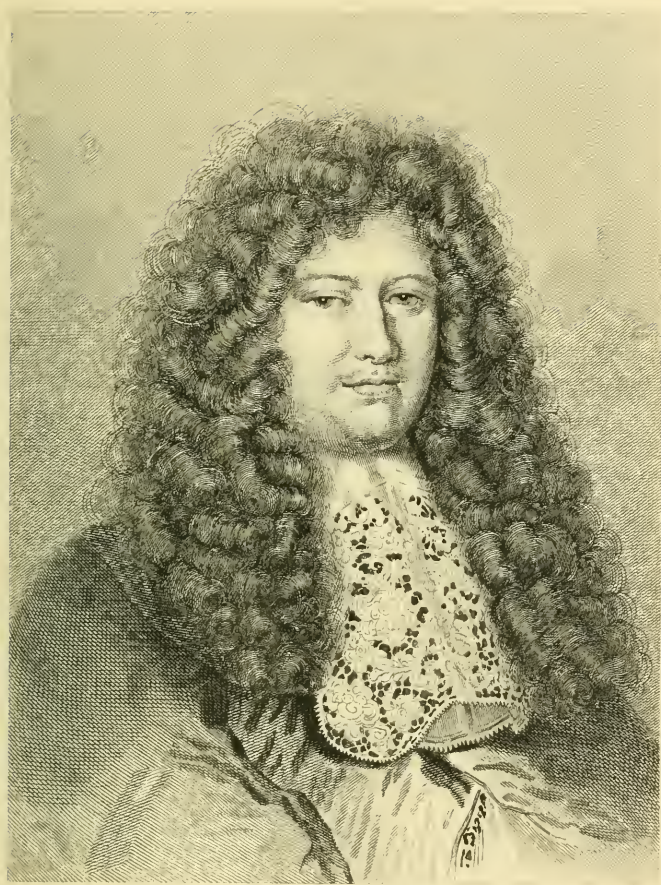
† Mémoires de Madame de la Fayette.













and, in his turn, sent to the mint all the valuable pieces of massive silver furniture which had adorned not only the gallery and state-rooms of Versailles, but even the private apartments, and which had so long excited the wonder and admiration of all its foreign visitors. Nothing was retained; but, great as was the sacrifice, its proceeds were far from presenting an equivalent—all these precious articles, wrought with a skill that formed their principal value, and which had been purchased by an outlay of millions, producing merely the price of the metal of which they had been composed; while the publicity of the measure only served to excite the raileries of the common enemy, and to encourage continued hostility towards a nation, so soon compelled to resort to such an expedient.\*

The influence of Louvois was, meanwhile, perceptibly on the wane; and a second adventure sufficed to lose him forever the estimation and favour of the King. In the spring of 1691, Louis XIV. formed the project of besieging Mons, and had decided that the ladies of the Court should accompany him in the expedition; but the Minister entered a formal protest against this arrangement, asserting that, at such a crisis, it was an expense which could not prudently be contemplated; and the King, deeply mortified alike by the opposition and its declared cause, was compelled to yield. It was at this siege that Louvois committed the last imprudence which was fated to fill up the measure of his disgrace.

As the King was inspecting the outposts, he remarked a cavalry picket which he considered to be

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.

injudiciously placed, and of which he accordingly changed the position ; when, in the course of the same day, chancing to repass the spot, he found it once more stationed at the very point from which he had removed it in the morning ; and, indignant at so palpable a disrespect to his orders, he inquired of the officer in command who had authorised him to return to his original post.

He was informed that it was M. de Louvois who had marched the picket back an hour previously.

The next question of the King was, whether M. de Louvois was aware that it was his Majesty himself who had posted his men in a new position. And the reply was affirmative.

“ Is this his business ? ” exclaimed the King, angrily. “ He believes himself to be a great warrior, and to know everything.” And then, with an authoritative gesture, he commanded the picket to return to the spot where he had himself posted them.

Although Louvois was ignorant of all the motives of displeasure which the Monarch harboured against him, he soon became convinced that his ruin had been determined. He felt that the thunderbolt was about to fall. “ I know not,” he exclaimed to a friend, “ if he will content himself by dismissing me from office, or if he purposes to condemn me to a prison ; and I care not what his decision may be when once I have ceased to hold the reins of government.” In vain did his confidant endeavour to reassure him, by recalling to his memory that he had, during the last ten years, repeated the same apprehension at least a score of times. “ I may have done so,” was the melancholy

reply ; " but now all is changed. We have a hundred times had bitter altercations, and I have left his cabinet when he has been angry and excited, yet, on the following day, I have found him calm and courteous. It is so no longer ; for the last fortnight his brow has never been without a frown. He has made up his mind to sacrifice me." \*

Weighed down by this conviction, Louvois became broken in mind and weakened in body. A slow fever fastened upon him, and he was soon quite incapable of concealing his uneasiness. The Maréchale de Rochefort and Madame de Blanzac, two of his most intimate friends, having paid him a visit at Meudon, he proposed, in the course of the day, to drive them out ; and while so engaged, they heard him talking earnestly to himself, and at several intervals caught the words, " Will he do it ? Will they make him do it ? No, no. Nevertheless — No ; he dare not."

During this monologue, the mother and daughter, who listened in silence, were suddenly startled by perceiving that the horses were on the very edge of a piece of water into which they were about to plunge ; and the Maréchale had only time to seize the reins, and to utter a piercing shriek, in order to arouse the Minister from his revery, and warn him of the danger to which they were exposed, when he turned towards his affrighted companions with a melancholy smile, confessing that he had been so buried in thought that he had entirely forgotten the duty in which he was engaged.

\* Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de Louis XIV., par l'Abbé de Choisy.



Finally, on the 16th of June, 1691, his fate was determined. He had on the 14th transacted business as usual with the King, in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, when another stormy scene took place. Louis XIV., who still remembered and resented, with great bitterness, the burning of the Palatinate, and who had by no means forgotten the still more personal offence of the displaced picket, made no effort to conceal his resentment, but thwarted in every instance the projects of his Minister, and opposed his opinions so determinedly that the patience of Louvois at length gave way, and, suddenly throwing upon the table a packet of papers which he chanced at the moment to hold in his hand, he rushed from the room, exclaiming, "It is impossible to serve you."

When he reached home, the War-Secretary abandoned himself to the most gloomy despair. The first furious ebullition of his Royal master might have been the mere impulsive effect of temporary passion, but the persevering verbal indignity to which he had been that day subjected was too systematic to admit of any such misconception. Ambition was the one ruling passion of his life; he cared not for the mental labour or the moral responsibility entailed upon him by the difficult and onerous office which he held; he forgot all in a sense of the power that it conferred; and he felt that, in losing place, he lost all for which he cared to live.

At eleven o'clock on the same night the heart-broken Minister received a private letter from Madame de Maintenon, in which she assured him that the King had consented to overlook his impetuosity, and that he was at liberty to present himself, as usual, on the

following day in the Council Chamber—a permission of which he gladly availed himself—when, as he had been assured, Louis XIV. met him without a vestige of displeasure, and addressed him almost with a smile. Louvois, however, was too well acquainted with the secret thoughts and lip-deep policy of his Royal master to be so easily misled. For five-and-twenty years he had been accustomed to study not only his words, but also his looks; and the very calmness of the King upon this occasion, when he had so recently been subjected to an affront from a subject, sufficed to convince the Minister that his influence and his power were at an end forever, and that even his person was not secure.

At the termination of the Council he retired at once to his residence, which he reached on foot, and where he had no sooner arrived than he commanded that the Marquis de Barbesieux, his son, might be desired to follow him to his chamber. In five minutes the summons was obeyed, but it was too late; for, when the Marquis entered the room, his father had already expired.

The impression of Louvois had, however, been a correct one; for his arrest on the succeeding day, and his imprisonment in the Bastille, had already been determined on.\*

When the death of his Minister was announced to Louis XIV. he was about to visit his fountains; but he had no sooner received this intelligence than he began to walk rapidly to and fro in his apartment, uttering from time to time a few incoherent words, and

\* This fact was communicated by the King himself to Monsieur de Chamillard, by whom it was repeated to the Duke of St. Simon.



on one occasion exclaiming, hoarsely, "the wretched man must have dreaded the fate of Fouquet!" drawing, as he spoke, a paper from his bosom, which he tore into a thousand fragments. Some of these were collected, and afterwards joined together, by the care and skill of a curious courtier, when they proved, as he had anticipated, to be portions of a *lettre-de-cachet*, bearing the name of the offending Minister.

Pale, thoughtful, and agitated, the King was about to descend into the gardens, when a gentleman of the household of James II., who had been hastily despatched from St. Germain for that purpose, approached him, and in the name of his master offered a compliment of condolence on the loss which he had so suddenly experienced.

"Sir," said the Monarch, in an accent of which the cheerfulness admitted no mistake, "make my acknowledgments to the King and Queen of England, and assure them in my name that neither their interests nor my own will suffer from the circumstance."

As the messenger was retiring, his Majesty beckoned to M. de Lauzun, who chanced to be passing, and invited him to become his companion in a saunter through the park, when, as he traversed the orangery, evidently overwhelmed by thought, he suddenly raised his eyes towards that wing of the palace in which the Minister had just expired; and the window of the death-room being open, continued for a considerable time to gaze earnestly in that direction, until a strange expression passed over his countenance, and bending towards his companion, he whispered in his ear, with a constrained smile, "Just see the force of imagination

—I could have declared that I recognised in the distance the face of M. de Louvois !”

During the evening, however, Louis XIV. recovered his composure, and no allusion was made in his presence to the fatal event which had so recently occurred, until the advent of *Monsieur*, who, as he entered the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, exclaimed, earnestly, “ Oh ! sire, what a loss you have just sustained.”

“ By no means,” was the cold reply ; “ if M. de Louvois had not died so suddenly, he would have been in the Bastille within two days.”

The indifference of the King, was, however, exceeded by that of Madame de Maintenon, who had never forgiven the opposition of the deceased Minister to the recognition of her marriage ; and so little did she endeavour to conceal her real feelings, that upon being asked by a friend if she intended to put up prayers for the soul of the deceased, she answered, with some asperity, that she had sins enough of her own which required her prayers, and was not consequently called upon to expiate those of others.

Rumours of poison followed close upon the death of the Minister ; and St. Simon even asserts that the crime was proved at the *post mortem* examination of his body. According to the statement of the Duke, Louvois, who was a great water-drinker, always had a jug full of that liquid placed upon the mantel of his cabinet, from which he drank whenever he required it. He had swallowed a draught from this jug before he proceeded to the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, and just as a servant retired who had been alone in the room for several minutes. This man was subsequently

arrested, and put upon his trial; but it had scarcely commenced when he was liberated by the King's order, and the depositions which had been taken committed to the flames, with an express command that no further investigation should take place.

Louvois was no sooner in his grave than a marked and striking change was effected in the manner of Madame de Maintenon. We have stated elsewhere that, although continually present at all the discussions which arose between the King and his Minister, she invariably remained silent, and apparently abstracted, until appealed to for her opinion. She had also hitherto stringently abstained from influencing (at least visibly) any public measure, or the fortunes of any public man, while she had limited her familiar circle to a small number of individuals, and those selected rather for their social qualities than their political position; but suddenly a revolution, alike of feeling and of action, supervened; she became the centre of Court favour, the object of Court adulation, and the source of Court advancement. "My attendants never served me as they should have done until they saw me leaving your apartments," wrote one of the first nobles of France to the *ci-devant* "widow Scarron" upon one occasion; while a second courtier, in a circle where the history of the century was under discussion, observed that, after the death of Louvois, the next chapter should be headed, "End of the reign of Louis the Great," and the succeeding one "Reign of Frances of Aubigné." \*

The epigram was a bitter one.

\* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.



## CHAPTER II

The Marquis de Pomponne—Industry of Louis XIV.—Social Advancement of the Ministers—Marriages of the Duke of Chartres and the Duke of Maine—Governors of the Duke of Chartres—The Abbé Dubois—Portrait of Philip of Orleans—The Royal Brothers—Frivolity of Monsieur ; His Portrait ; His Costume ; His Insignificance—The Value of an Additional Inch—Magnificence of Madame de Montespan—Madame de Maintenon and the New Duchess of Maine ; Her Arrogance—Stinging Rejoinder of the Duke of Elbœuf—Cowardice of the Duke of Maine—The Dutch Journal—Death of Mademoiselle—Presumption of M. de Lauzun—Capture of Namur—The Ghost-Seer—Madame Armond—A Baffled Intrigue—Power of Madame de Maintenon—Distrust of the King—Equivocal Position of Madame de Maintenon—The Monarch and the Court Ladies—Ambulatory Banquets.

A MONTH after the death of Louvois the Marquis de Pomponne was called to the Council ; Torcy, his son-in-law, confirmed in his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Marquis de Barbesieux made Secretary of the war office ; and from this period Louis XIV. devoted himself, with increased energy, to the transaction of public business. Those who were the most familiar with his habits were lost in astonishment at the activity which he evinced. He limited his hunting excursions to a couple of hours ;

returned to the palace at a given moment; devoted four hours to reading, writing, and dictating to his secretaries; and frequently dismissed the Princesses immediately after supper, in order to expedite his foreign couriers.\* Nor was it merely by his own example that the King encouraged his Ministers to increased diligence; he also rewarded it by valuable presents and personal distinction; and during the latter years of his reign they succeeded in placing themselves on a level with the nobility, whose dress and manners they adopted, and with whom they formed alliances calculated still more to lessen the disparity which had formerly existed between them; while their wives ultimately obtained the privilege of driving in the Royal equipages, and dining at the Royal table.

Two marriages of importance were, however destined, at the commencement of the year 1692, to relieve for a time the monotony of public business and the tedium of the Court—those of the Duke of Chartres and the Duke of Maine. Louis XIV. had, as we have already stated, been for several years endeavouring to obtain the consent of *Monsieur* to an alliance between his son and Mademoiselle de Blois,† the youngest daughter of Madame de Montespan, in which he ultimately succeeded through the influence of the Chevalier de Lorraine, the favourite of the

\* Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

† This Princess was the third of the King's daughters who had borne the same name; the first having been Mary Anne, Princess of Conti, of whom Madame de la Vallière was the mother; and the second a former daughter of Madame de Montespan, who died at an early age.

Duke ; but he had found it impossible to secure either that of *Madame* or of her son, until the agency of an individual, whose insignificance would have appeared to place him beyond the pale of so exalted an intrigue, liberated the Monarch from his embarrassment, and enabled him to accomplish a marriage which he had so long desired.

*Monsieur* had been singularly unfortunate in his selection of Governors for the Duke of Chartres ; as, although they had in every case been men of distinguished merit and acquirements, his mania for exalted titles had caused him to appoint persons already so far advanced in life, that they succeeded each other with a rapidity inimical to the interests of their pupil. In the interval from 1683 to 1692, M. de Chartres had no less than four—the Duke of Navailles, Marshal of France, an honourable, virtuous, and learned man, lived only two years after his appointment ; the Marshal of Estrades, also an accomplished preceptor, did not longer fill the office, although he was seventy-nine when he died ; the Duke of la Vieuville, the least eligible of the three, survived one year longer ; and was replaced in his turn by M. d'Arcy, a Councillor of State, a brave soldier and a skilful diplomatist, but who, unfortunately for the young Duke, had been about him only for a short period when his marriage emancipated him from all guardianship.

During the intervals consequent upon these changes, the duty of governor had been performed by M. de St. Laurent, Deputy-Master of the Ceremonies to *Monsieur*, a man of obscure birth and unprepossessing person, but, nevertheless, well calculated to educate a



Prince. His want of nobility had, however, sufficed to deprive him of the title of governor ; although upon every occasion when a vacancy occurred, as well as when etiquette required a new appointment, the capacity and merit of M. de St. Laurent caused him to retain all the authority of the office, even while others enjoyed the honour.

In the course of his frequent visits to the curate of St. Eustache, with whom he was on terms of intimacy, M. de St. Laurent formed an acquaintance with a youth named Dubois, whose extraordinary intellect made a strong impression upon his mind. He was the son of an apothecary of Brive-la-Galliarde in Lower Limousin, who had pursued the study of physic at Rheims under a Dr. Letellier ; but the latter having died before his studies were completed, had bequeathed him to the kindness of the curate, who being, in his turn, unable to provide for him, had recommended him to the notice of M. de St. Laurent.

As the young man wrote a fine hand, his new patron presented him to the Duke of Chartres in the capacity of Writing-Master ; but ere long, conscious that he was thus cramping his genius, he caused him to assume the abbatial costume, in order to secure to him a befitting position in the establishment, and promoted him to the study, where his duties consisted in preparing the Prince for his final examination by himself. Thus St. Laurent at once found the personal relief which his increasing infirmities began to render necessary, and had the satisfaction of witnessing the daily progress of his Royal pupil.

From the period in which Dubois had advanced in

fortune, he had courted the good graces of the Chevalier de Lorraine and the Marquis d'Effiat, who bore unlimited sway in the household of *Monsieur*; and at the death of M. de St. Laurent, as the *soi-disant* abbé was already established in the functions of tutor, his new friends became anxious that his official station should be confirmed. This, however, could not, as they were well aware, be easily accomplished, owing to the obscurity of his birth, which was still fresh in the memory of every one. They consequently temporised; raised objections to the persons proposed; caused the postponement of the appointment; expatiated on the extraordinary improvement of the young Prince under his tuition; and at length, when they had rendered *Monsieur* weary of the subject, succeeded in securing the nomination of their new *protégé*; who, in return for so great a service, and conscious of the necessity of their continued support, lent himself unscrupulously to all their views.

The first service which they exacted from the titular abbé was his cooperation in promoting the marriage between the Duke of Chartres and the King's daughter; to which the young Prince was strongly opposed, not merely because any matrimonial alliance must tend to interfere with his favourite pursuits and habits, but also through the influence of his mother, who, justly proud of her four-and-thirty quarterings, which had as yet been unsullied by any derogatory alliance, looked upon the union of her son with one whom she persisted in calling "his Majesty's bastard," as a disgrace which could never again be obliterated.

Dubois had, however, the advantage of constant



companionship with his pupil, who soon discovered that the presence of his preceptor was quite as essential in his hours of recreation as in those of study.

Philip of Orleans, the future Regent of France, had, at this period, far outgrown his age, both in physical and mental power ; and although still a boy in years, was manly in all his ideas and habits. He prided himself greatly upon a fancied resemblance to Henri IV., whom he endeavoured to imitate in every particular ; but the analogy between them was not so striking as regarded their persons, for the Duke of Chartres had neither the long countenance of that Monarch nor his strongly-marked Bourbon nose, nor his lofty forehead ; the cynical expression of their eyes alone conveying any idea of resemblance.

The Prince was of middle height, and eminently graceful in his deportment, although he walked badly, owing to an organic weakness to which he had nearly fallen a victim in his infancy ; his eyes were bright and lively, his mouth joyous, his complexion high, his face round and full, and his nose thick and flat, with large nostrils ; in short, it was a countenance of mingled intellect and sensuality, which was the very transcript of his character. His hand was singularly white and well formed, and he was so anxious to preserve its beauty, that it was said by a celebrated writer of the time, that "each of his nails exacted as much care as a reliquary."

A solid education, pursued with ardour, had accelerated the precocity of his intellect ; for not only had he studied all the modern languages, formed a thorough acquaintance with the authors of antiquity,

turned his serious attention to the important questions of philosophy and politics, and mastered much of the knowledge necessary to the administration of the internal economy of a kingdom, but he had also secured those resources against the tedium of a Court, and the etiquette of Royalty which were able to render him at every crisis independent of both, by cultivating literature and art. His favourite studies were, however, mathematics and astronomy, and his darling pursuit chemistry, to which he devoted a great portion of his time. He was an agreeable musician, a pleasing poet, and a good artist, and excelled in everything which required quickness, memory, and address. He cared little for field sports, and still less for the etiquette of Versailles; preferring the liberty which is so seldom accorded to persons of his rank, to all the high-sounding honours to which he might fairly have laid claim. His first campaign at the siege of Mons had sufficed to prove that he was courageous even to temerity; while his Governor, the Marquis d'Arcy, had been compelled, at the battle of Leuze, to throw himself before him at the risk of his own life, in order to prevent his falling into the power of the enemy. In temper he was joyous and affable, slow to take offence, and so thoroughly devoid of egotism, that he was frequently wanting in justice to himself. He despised and detested everything which savoured of revenge, and readily forgave an injury even before it was acknowledged. He was, however, slow to believe in the probity of mankind, and had no faith in female virtue, his early experience of the sex having tended to give him an unfortunate bias, and to lead him to consider

such a quality as at once unnecessary and inconvenient ; and consequently, with all his talents, all his acquirements, and all his refined tastes, he early became dissipated, fickle, and heartless.

Such was the ardent and ill-regulated nature upon which Dubois was called to exercise his influence, and he did not hesitate to pander to the worst passions of his pupil in order to retain and increase it, while the excesses in which he encouraged the young Prince became at length so notorious that they reached the ears of the King, and excited his extreme displeasure, and this was the precise moment chosen by Dubois to extort his reluctant consent to a marriage, which, as he ably represented, would tend at once to restore him to the favour of the Monarch.

*Monsieur* had already, as we have previously stated, been induced by the Chevalier de Lorraine to accede to the wishes of his royal brother, and although his pride had for a time revolted at the idea of bestowing his only son upon a daughter of Madame de Montespan, he had ultimately done so the more readily as he was sincerely attached to the banished favourite, and foresaw, in the projected alliance, an increase of personal favour with the King. Moreover, the dominant feature of *Monsieur's* character was weakness. He habitually permitted himself to be governed by every one who acquired an influence over him, and did not appear to perceive that he was a mere puppet in the hands of his favourites.

Of *Madame* he stood in an awe which was so thoroughly appreciated at Court, that during the early favour of Madame de Maintenon, when that lady had

incurred the displeasure of the Duchess by a sarcasm, and the Prince complained of the insult to the King, saying that it had greatly offended *his wife*, Louis XIV. had replied, with a smile,

“ For one who piques himself on speaking his native language with so much correctness, you have just committed a grievous error, in which I will set you right. Here is what you should have said : ‘ I am come to complain of Madame de Maintenon, who, by some ambiguous words, has offended, or has endeavoured to offend, *my husband*.’ ”

*Monsieur*, conscious of the absurdity of his position, could not restrain his laughter, and the sarcasm of the mistress of the robes was suffered to go unpunished.\*

The great delight of *Monsieur* consisted in building, in masquerading, in fêtes, and in amusements of every description. He cared nothing for more exalted pleasures, or more intellectual pursuits; he disliked reading, and detested all serious conversation, but entered with delight into the gossipry of the court-ladies, and the frivolities of the courtiers. The ball-room and the table were the two great occupations of his life, and he was conspicuous in both, for he danced admirably, and ate voraciously. The kingly magnificence which he displayed at his Court in the Palais-Royal, and at St. Cloud, extended to the merest trifles, and his toilet-table was a mass of plate and jewellery. His prodigality, excessive as it was, met, however, with no rebuke from Louis XIV., who, satisfied by the deference and respect which he always exhibited towards his person, and satisfied that he would never oppose

\* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

his measures, indulged him in all his expensive and fantastic follies. Morally, *Monsieur* was null. He had more manner than mind, more simplicity than wit, more carelessness than kindness, more indiscretion than frankness, and more distrust than prudence; and in his case qualities which would have been estimable in others degenerated into defects.

This sketch of *Monsieur* would, however, be incomplete, did we not subjoin a description of his person, as he appeared at the marriage of the Duke of Chartres.

In stature he was very short, a defect that he endeavoured to overcome by the immense height of the heels of his shoes, which were surcharged with ribbons, and gave him the appearance of walking upon stilts, while the extreme rotundity of his figure destroyed the grace of his carriage, and made his movements heavy. He bore a considerable resemblance to Louis XIII., save that he did not possess the same elevated cast of countenance. His face was extremely long, his nose prominent, his eyes large and dark, and his mouth small. His physiognomy had an expression of kindness, which was, however, counteracted by haughtiness; and when he smiled, which he did frequently, and generally at an unfortunate moment, his whole appearance was rendered less prepossessing by the exhibition of two ranges of teeth which were unfortunately defective. He wore an immense black wig, curled, and slightly powdered, which, brought forward upon his shoulders, fell on either side to his chest in absurd and almost ridiculous profusion, and also a quantity of rouge, and even

patches. His coat was composed of green silk, with stripes and button-holes of gold embroidery, and was gathered into folds upon the hips in order to increase their apparent size, which fell below the knees like a tunic; the buttons were of emeralds set in gold, and his waistcoat, of rose-coloured silk, embroidered with golden flowers in a profusion which almost concealed the original material, was traversed from right to left by the blue ribbon of the Holy Ghost, supporting a sword whose hilt was incrustated with diamonds, and disappeared under an enormous green bow fringed with gold. Ribbons were profusely scattered over the whole of his costume, and ornamented not only the principal articles of his dress, but even his white satin shoes, and his round beaver with its double circle of feathers overhanging the edges on all sides, which he never placed upon his head save in cases of absolute necessity, or on occasions of rigorous etiquette. The principal feature of his costume was, however, the extraordinary and prodigious display of jewellery in which he indulged. Crosses and stars were profusely strewn over his vest; he had rings upon every finger, and bracelets on his wrists; triple ruffles about his hands; and a cravat and collar of Hungarian point almost beyond price; and in this extravagant attire he divided his attention between the courtiers and the mirror, into which he gazed with evident satisfaction, and by whose aid he was enabled speedily to correct every little derangement in his attire consequent upon the heat and pressure of the throng.

Such was *Monsieur* in the year 1692—a weak friend, a harmless enemy, and an effeminate Prince; and under



these circumstances it will scarcely appear extraordinary that he should so far forget his dignity as even to sacrifice the honour of the House of Orleans to present convenience and probable advantage. *Madame*, however, was differently constituted; and her indignation was so violent when her son at length announced to her that he had acceded to the wishes of the King and the orders of his father, that in the first paroxysm of her anger and mortification she answered him by a blow.

But aware that against the will of Louis XIV. the supineness of *Monsieur*, and the concession of her son, she had no alternative save ultimate compliance, *Madame* at length resolved to reconcile herself to what she persisted, nevertheless, in calling her dishonour; for she dreaded that should she continue to indulge in an opposition which must necessarily prove fruitless, the King might be induced to punish her pertinacity by abandoning the interests of the Elector-Palatine, of whom he was at that period the support.

In consequence of this somewhat tardy reflection, therefore, *Madame* gradually suffered herself to be appeased, and even attended the reading of the marriage contract, without betraying one symptom of indignation; especially as Louis XIV. gave to his daughter a dower of two millions of livres, to be paid at the close of the war; and an annual income of two hundred thousand, with a marriage-gift in jewels estimated at two hundred thousand crowns; renewing, moreover, to the Duke of Chartres the donation already made to *Monsieur* of the Palais-Royal, bequeathed to the Crown by Cardinal Mazarin.



The marriage was accomplished with great magnificence, to the chagrin of the Marquise de Montespan ; who, after having vented her annoyance in a letter which she wrote on the occasion to the Bavarian Princess (and which was couched in terms well fitted to arouse all the pride of *Madame*, and to strengthen the hatred she had long borne towards the haughty favourite), did not condescend to recognise the alliance in any other manner.

Only one month later it was followed by that of the Duke of Maine with Anna Louisa Benedicta de Bourbon, Mademoiselle de Charolais, the second daughter of the Prince de Condé.\*

The King had in vain endeavoured to dissuade M. du Maine from marriage, frankly declaring to him, that it was not persons in his position who were called upon to found a family ; but, urged by the wishes of the Duke, and in compliance with the entreaties of Madame de Maintenon, whose affection for her nursling continued to be boundless, Louis XIV. at length consented to the measure, although in direct opposition to his better judgment. He had always been anxious that the legitimated Princes should remain unmarried ; but as he found it impossible to convince the Duke of the propriety of such an arrangement, he resolved to seek him a wife in one of the first houses in France ; upon which the Prince, informed of what had transpired, proposed one of his own daughters to the Monarch.† M. de Condé saw that the rank, the influence, and the favour of the King's natural children

\* Granddaughter of the Great Condé.

† Souvenirs de Madame de Caylus.

were increasing from day to day ; and the fact that one of them had actually become Duchess of Chartres, rendered him more than ever anxious to secure the Duke of Maine as his son-in-law. In these views he was earnestly encouraged by *Madame*, who had begun to have painful apprehensions that Louis XIV., after having disposed of her son, would next deprive her of her daughter, and who consequently rejoiced to see the danger of such an event removed through the agency of the Prince.

The proposition was no sooner accepted than it became necessary to choose between the three sisters ; and as they were all extremely small, the selection was made by measurement ; when Anna Louisa Benedicta proving to be the tallest by an inch, it was decided that she should become Duchess of Maine. The marriage took place with the same ceremonies as that of the Duke of Chartres ; but on this occasion, Madame de Montespan, whose vanity was flattered that the alliance should have been solicited by the family of the bride, was regal in her liberality. She presented the bed, of which the hangings, embroidered with gold and pearls, cost more than a million of livres of the present day ; and gave to her daughter-in-law a casket of jewels estimated at two millions of that time ; while she also refused to receive again one of her three costly services of plate, which had been borrowed of her by her son on the occasion of the bridal banquet. Nothing could more thoroughly tend to demonstrate the satisfaction of the Marchioness than this profusion, for she was naturally avaricious, and averse to making presents ; but the opportunity

here afforded, alike of exhibiting her magnificence and of offering an additional affront to *Madame*, was too precious to be sacrificed to mere feelings of economy.

The settlement actually made, or the donation really bestowed, by Louis XIV. upon his favourite son on the occasion of his marriage was never known; and it is believed that, as he had already been rendered extremely wealthy by the compulsory bequests of *MADemoiselle*, it was wilfully kept secret, in order not to shock the feelings of the nation, which had begun to evince some symptoms of having awakened to a consciousness of wide contrast existing between the prodigality of the nobles and the poverty of the people. All that transpired was the fact that, on the eve of the ceremony, the King had presented to the bride two costly caskets, the one containing a suit of diamonds, and the other a set of mixed jewels.

From the moment of the marriage, *Madame de Maintenon* attached herself strongly to the wife of her favourite. "The Princess," she wrote to the Abbess of Maubuisson, "is about to pass the Holy Week in your community. Compel her to rest herself thoroughly. They kill her here by the restraints and fatigues of the Court. She is crushed under the weight of gold and precious stones. They will prevent her from growing, and destroy her health. She is prettier without a cap than with all their ornaments. She eats nothing, in all probability does not sleep well, and I am dying with fear lest they should have married her too young. I wish I could keep her at St. Cyr, dressed like one of the pupils, and romping as merrily. There are no austerities practiced in con-

ventual houses equal to those to which the etiquette of a Court subjects the great."

In another letter she describes the young Princess as "pretty, amiable, cheerful, and witty"; but as though she had nevertheless a latent doubt of the final result of the motherly interest which she was taking in her welfare, she adds, "If she deceives me, I renounce all Princesses for the future." Nor was it long ere she perceived that even with the good qualities which she had discovered, or believed that she had discovered, in the new Duchess, there was no solid foundation to work upon: "You have deceived me," she writes, more sadly than reproachfully, to the governess of the Princess, "on the principal point upon which I consulted you—that of religion. She has no tendency whatever towards piety, but is anxious to do everything that she sees others do. I do not desire to make her a bigot; but I confess that I should like to find her more regular in her devotions, and more agreeable alike to God, to the King, and to the Duke of Maine, who has sufficient good sense to desire his wife should be more virtuous than those by whom she is surrounded." \*

We have already stated that the Duke of Maine was witty, cunning, and deceitful, but eminently agreeable whenever he sought to please; while his enmity was the more dangerous from the fact that, when he desired to revenge a wrong, he hesitated at no meanness or falsehood which could insure success. His wife possessed an intellect equal to his own, but she exercised it in a different manner, and frittered

\* Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

away capabilities of a high order upon novels and plays, making the latter almost the business of her life, committing them to memory, and afterwards causing them to be performed at her little Court. Her courage was masculine in its extent and violence: she was adventurous, bold, and passionate, ever acting upon the impulse of the moment, and careless of all results. She despised the weakness of her husband, and openly reproached him with an economy which she designated as avarice, and to which she at once declared that she would never lend herself.

M. du Maine was unequal to contend against this fiery spirit; even his subtlety was at fault; and while he persisted in the same line of conduct by which he had long succeeded in persuading the Monarch that he was utterly devoid of that very ambition which was in fact perpetually gnawing at his heart, passing whole days in his closet, avoiding society, hunting without attendants, and dining alone in his apartment, he was condemned to the mortification of seeing the Duchess hold a magnificent Court at Sceaux, (which splendid estate had been presented to him by the King upon his marriage), and plunge into expenses by which he was ultimately ruined, without venturing to expostulate, such was his terror of the violent disposition of his wife.

To this want of moral courage the Duke of Maine added a total absence of personal bravery; and the fact was so well known that it at length became the common jest of the courtiers, who sought so little to disguise from him their opinions upon the subject, that on one occasion, at the close of a campaign, the Duke

of Elbœuf inquired of him where he expected to serve during the following year, remarking that wherever his Highness went he had made up his mind to accompany him. The Prince inquired for what reason. "Because," was the sarcastic reply, as the Duke glanced towards the bystanders, "near your person one is sure to be safe."

M. du Maine bit his lip, and turned away without making any rejoinder.

This unfortunate failing of his favourite son had, however, remained unknown to Louis XIV. until he on one occasion met with a paragraph in a Dutch journal, in which the most flattering panegyrics were poured forth upon the courage of the Duke of Maine, who had, as it was asserted, after exhibiting during the progress of an engagement the desperate valour of a hero, finally received a severe wound, and been carried from the field insensible. The eye of the King flashed and his brow flushed as he read the passage, while he even forgot the danger of the smitten Prince in the pride that he felt at his heroism ; but this paternal joy was destined to be short-lived. In the next number of the journal an apology was made for the error into which it had been betrayed, by a mistake in the name of the brave officer who was so grievously wounded, and an assurance given that the Duke of Maine was not only unhurt, but that he had never, throughout the whole of the action, been exposed to the slightest danger.

This elaborate contradiction awakened the suspicions of the King, and he inquired of one of his valets-de-chambre, named La Vienne, from whom he

frequently learned truths which others endeavoured to conceal, if he had heard a doubt cast upon the personal courage of the Duke of Maine. La Vienne remained silent, a circumstance which only increased the curiosity and apprehension of the Monarch, who forthwith insisted upon a reply, and thus urged, the reluctant attendant was compelled to admit that the cowardice of M. du Maine had long passed into a proverb, not only in the armies of his Majesty, but even in those of the enemy—a revelation which was one of the most heavy blows, alike to his pride and his affection, to which throughout his reign Louis XIV. was ever subjected.\*

The marriage of the Duke was not agreeable to MADemoisELLE, to whom he was indebted for the principal portion of his fortune. Mademoiselle de Bourbon had offended her by a want of respect on several occasions, and she declared that if the alliance ever took place she would never see either the Duke or the Duchess again, a threat which was nevertheless disregarded, for there was nothing further to be hoped from her generosity, and her displeasure was too unimportant to change the resolution of the King.

MADemoisELLE was not long destined, however, to endure this mortification; for, on the 5th of April in the following year she died in the Palace of Luxembourg, at the age of sixty-three years, the richest private Princess in Europe. The hatred which had replaced her former passion for Lauzun was too powerful for her strength; and after living for years in a wearisome and monotonous pomp, which she dragged

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.



from one of her estates to another, without obtaining from it either consideration or solace ; absenting herself entirely from the Court save on occasions of ceremony when her presence was essential ; frittering away her intellect in vain and idle futilities ; and finding her principal occupation in assuming mourning at the death of every personage with whom she could claim the slightest and most distant connection, and explaining in the most prolix manner to those about her the exact degree and amount of the consanguinity and alliance of each, she ultimately fell into a state of languor and suffering which, after enduring for many months, terminated in death.

*Monsieur* and *Madame* were her constant companions during her sickness, for, in addition to the close intimacy which had long existed between herself and the Prince, he coveted her immense fortune, and became, as he had anticipated, her sole legatee. The largest portion of her original possessions had, however, as we have already seen, passed into other hands.

On the death of the Princess, M. de Lauzun assumed the mourning of a widowed husband, and appeared at the funeral in a black cloak—an exhibition which seriously displeased the King, who commanded the Duke of St. Aignan to desire him instantly to retire. “I cannot at such a moment listen to the voice of pride,” was the cool reply of the former favourite when the message was delivered to him ; “I am absorbed by my grief, and could wish to see the King more occupied by his own ;” and he remained to the close of the ceremony ; while, even when the period was passed

in which the trappings of woe should in every case have been discontinued, he nevertheless persisted in changing his liveries to a shade of brown so deep as to be almost black, in order, as he stated, to keep alive the memory of *MADemoiselle*, whose portrait was to be seen in every apartment of his house.

The campaigns of 1692 and 1693 were the last in which Louis XIV. ever took an active part, and the capture of Namur his closing exploit; and it was on his return to Versailles, after this expedition, that *Madame de Maintenon* is asserted to have resolved upon making a final effort to effect her recognition as Queen of France; but all ordinary means having failed to accomplish her purpose, she now, according to these authorities, determined to have recourse to supernatural agency, believing that although the Monarch had resisted all human intervention he would not venture to dispute what he could not fail to consider as a decree from Heaven.

One day, accordingly, a farrier from the little town of Salon, in Provence, arrived at Versailles, having made the journey on foot, and proceeded at once to the palace, without even waiting to rest himself, where he applied to M. de Brissac to obtain for him an audience of the King, to whom he had, as he declared, something of the highest importance to communicate. M. de Brissac, however, declined the mission, the obscure station of the applicant not rendering him eligible for such an honour. But the peasant was not to be repulsed, and his pertinacity was so great, and his applications for admittance to the presence of the Monarch so persevering in every quarter where he imagined

he had a prospect of success, that the circumstance at length reached the ears of Louis himself, who, anxious to see how far the resolution of the man would carry him, caused him to be told that what he requested was impracticable, as the King of France was not accessible to every comer. Nevertheless, the peasant refused to yield, asserting, that if he could once see his Majesty, he would tell him things which were only known to himself, and which would at once convince him that he was not required to listen to an impostor; but demanding, if this interview were really impossible, that he might at least be admitted to one of the Ministers of State.

The King, curious to ascertain the result of this singular adventure, desired the Marquis de Barbesieux to receive the man on the following day, who, when he next made his appearance at the palace, was accordingly directed to his apartments; but the peasant shook his head, observing that he had requested to be introduced to one of the Ministers of State, and that M. de Barbesieux was not a Minister of State. This objection startled every one; for the man had only been in Versailles a few days, and it was not anticipated that he could so soon have acquainted himself with the exact rank of the great officers of the Crown. It sufficed, however, to render the King more than ever desirous to penetrate the mystery of his errand; and he accordingly deputed M. de Pomponne, whose ministerial functions could not be disputed by this extraordinary farrier, to grant him the desired interview.

On learning by whom he was to be received, the peasant at once declared his willingness to confide his

secret ; and he was no sooner alone with the Minister in his cabinet than he related, that one night as he was returning at a late hour to his village, he suddenly found himself, while passing under a tree, surrounded by a great light, in the centre of which there appeared to him the figure of a woman, young, fair, and beautiful, dressed in a long, white robe, over which she wore a Royal mantle ; and he had scarcely remarked all this, when, as he asserted, she thus addressed him : “ I am the Queen Maria Theresa. Go to the King, and repeat to him the circumstances which I am about to communicate to you. Heaven will assist you during your journey ; and when you arrive, should the King doubt that it was I who sent you, then relate to him a circumstance of which he alone is cognisant, which no other person can know, and by which he will at once recognise the truth of what you will have to tell him. If, in the first place, as is extremely probable, you cannot obtain an audience of himself, demand to speak to a Minister of State ; but, above all things, make no communications to others, whatever may be their rank. Depart boldly and speedily, and execute what I command on pain of death.”

The peasant had scarcely, as he declared, solemnly pledged himself to implicit obedience, and learned the secrets upon which his mission was to be based, when he once more found himself alone and in darkness, and so thoroughly bewildered by the scene through which he had just passed, that he was unable to pursue his homeward path ; but, throwing himself down under the tree, ultimately forgot his terrors in sleep.

When he awoke on the following morning, he at-

tributed the whole adventure to a dream, and made no preparation for his journey ; but, two days afterwards, as he was passing by the same spot, the vision reappeared, uttering menaces so fearful, in consequence of his disobedience, that he again promised to comply, pleading as an excuse for his first failure, his utter destitution, and the impossibility of his undertaking so long a journey without the means of subsistence. To this objection the vision had, however, he said, replied by directing him to wait upon the commissioner of the province, and to inform him of what he had seen, and the orders which he had received ; adding, that he would then supply him with all that was necessary.

Nevertheless, it required a third apparition to convince the peasant, as he declared to the Minister, that he was really in his right mind ; but his terror became so great at the threats which were fulminated against him on this last occasion, that he immediately departed for Aix, where he told his extraordinary story to the commissioner, who, without hesitation, gave him a small sum of money, and urged him to set forth upon the instant.

Such was the tale to which M. de Pomponne was destined to listen ; and wild and extravagant as it appeared, it yet contained elements which startled the judgment of the statesman ; but it was in vain that, by every means he could invent, he endeavoured to acquire a knowledge of the assumed communication which was to be a password to the confidence of the King, as the man resolutely refused to confide it to any ears save those of the Monarch himself.

When he was informed of this circumstance, Louis

XIV. could no longer restrain his curiosity, but resolved personally to converse with the peasant, and for this purpose he desired that he might be introduced into his cabinet by a private stair. Their first interview, which was strictly secret, lasted an entire hour; and on the following day another took place of equal length, attended with the same precautions.

On the succeeding morning, as the King was descending the same staircase by which the ghost-seer had been introduced, in order to attend a hunt, M. de Duras, who by his high rank and still higher favour was in a position to say whatever he pleased to the Monarch, began to speak of the farrier of Salon with extreme contempt, and terminated his attack by a proverb which at that period was very commonly used, "Either that man is mad, or the King is not noble." As the words passed his lips, Louis XIV. suddenly stopped, and replied emphatically, "If the proverb be true, Duke, then it is I who am not noble; for I have twice conversed with him, and each time at considerable length, and I have found all that he has said replete with good sense and truth."

The extreme seriousness with which this declaration was made startled all by whom it was overheard; but as M. de Duras still ventured to reply by a doubtful gesture, the King added, "Learn that this man has spoken to me of a circumstance which occurred to myself more than twenty years ago, and of which no one living can be aware, since I never divulged it to any human being; and this was the apparition of a phantom in the forest of St. Germain, who addressed me in the precise words which he has since repeated."



The same result ensued to the last, whenever the name of this peasant was mentioned before the King. Throughout the whole period of his residence at Versailles all his expenses were defrayed by the house-steward of the Monarch ; and when he was at length dismissed, the King not only presented him with a sum of money, but commanded the Commissioner of Provence to take him under his especial protection, and, without removing him from his original sphere, to be careful that as long as he lived he should be amply provided for. It was not, however, to be anticipated that so singular an event as this could be suffered to pass quietly into oblivion ; and accordingly, despite the silence of the King and the discretion of his Minister, enough transpired upon the subject to enable the newsmongers of the Court to collect the following particulars.

There was resident at Marseilles a certain Madame Armond, whose life had been one long romance, and who, plain in person, limited in means, and an untitled widow, had nevertheless contrived so to fascinate all with whom she came into contact, that no one was surprised when she at length induced M. Armond, the Naval Commissioner of Marseilles, to marry her under the most extraordinary circumstances. This lady had been for years the most intimate friend of Madame de Maintenon ; and it was accordingly conjectured that in some moment of extreme confidence, which had since escaped his memory, the King had imparted to the latter the secret of the apparition of the forest of St. Germain, which he believed himself never to have revealed, and that Madame de Maintenon had, in her



turn, confided the circumstance to Madame Armond, who had made it her passport to the credulity of the farrier, as well as his own watch-word to the confidence of the King ; while, as regarded the mission with which this strange messenger was intrusted by the vision clad in white and covered by a Royal mantle, it was readily discovered to be an entreaty from the deceased Queen that his Majesty should, without further procrastination, publicly acknowledge Madame de Maintenon as her successor—a report which, moreover, coincided with that which had obtained at the period of Maria Theresa's death, that she had, in her last moments, placed her marriage-ring in the hand of Madame de Maintenon ! \*

If these rumours were, indeed, founded in truth, it is certain that the plot did not succeed, and that she never renewed a similar attempt, for she soon became convinced that the declared resolution of the King upon this subject would never be shaken ; and she had sufficient control over herself to accept his decision without a murmur, and to resign herself to his will. Nor had she reason to repent her prudence, for the Monarch no sooner perceived that he had nothing more to apprehend from her pertinacity than his respect, his confidence, and his affection increased tenfold, and her influence became so powerful that her interference sufficed to secure results which were otherwise unattainable.

A proof of this fact is afforded by the circumstance that a lady of small fortune, who was anxious to accomplish the marriage of her daughter with the heir

\* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

of a wealthy family, whose members did not consider the alliance sufficiently advantageous, conceived the idea of introducing herself surreptitiously into the antechamber of Madame de Maintenon towards the close of her dinner hour; when, having succeeded in arriving there, she counterfeited indisposition, and approaching a window with a napkin in her hand, requested a glass of water. She was seen thus occupied by several persons to whom she was known, and was supposed to have been an invited guest; the report of her having been seized with sudden indisposition at the table of Madame de Maintenon became current, and the intelligence of her favour in such a quarter having reached the family of the coveted bridegroom, they no longer withheld their consent to the marriage.\*

This anxiety to secure the interest of Madame de Maintenon was, without doubt, a consequence of the power which Louis XIV. had ceded to her over the affairs of the Court; but this power by no means extended to those of the government: indeed, in all subjects connected with state policy, the King was so constantly on his guard against her that, on several occasions, when she had openly betrayed her purpose, and that he discovered a particular Minister to be endeavouring to favour one of her relatives or friends, he made a point of opposing the arrangement for that very reason, and could never be induced to yield, even making a merit to herself of his firmness. When this occurred, Madame de Maintenon at first had recourse to tears, and was on thorns for several days afterwards, but having secured the appointment of Fagon as

\* Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

principal physician, and feeling herself safe in the hands of a man who could essentially serve her, and whose opportunities of so doing were certain and frequent, she ultimately affected illness after scenes of this description, and generally contrived by such means to carry her point.\*

It is presumed also that Louis XIV. had reason to suspect Madame de Maintenon of some secret intrigue, for his perseverance in keeping her almost constantly in his sight became at this period so determined that she complains of it in one of her letters as of an insupportable restraint. "The King," she writes, "is perpetually on guard over me. I see no one. He never leaves my room, and I am compelled to rise at five in the morning in order to write to you." And again, on another occasion, she exclaims mournfully—"I experience more than ever that there is no compensation for the loss of liberty."

Her happiest moments were passed at St. Cyr, where she delighted to spend whole days in the midst of her pupils. "They occupy me considerably," she was accustomed to say, "but far more agreeably than the intrigues of people who are alternately the deceivers and the deceived, and frequently both at the same time. My difficulty is to keep them occupied in school from morning till night, which is not easily managed when girls are eighteen or twenty years of age." †

The public, who were not aware of these facts—some from personal dislike, and others from jealousy

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.

† Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

of her presumed influence—invariably rendered her responsible for everything that occurred, especially when the results were unfortunate or unpopular; and thus her position became one of constant annoyance as well as of perpetual difficulty. A Queen in her own apartments, she had no sooner passed the threshold than she became a mere private individual. She affected no state, gave precedence to all women of rank, and neither made nor received visits, save in the case of the English Queen; nevertheless, it must be remarked that all general officers, when they either left Versailles to join the army or returned from a campaign, and all great personages who were compelled to absent themselves from the Court on important business, both in going and returning, never failed to pay their respects to her. Her chosen society was limited to a few persons of both sexes, but her solitude was nevertheless perpetually invaded.

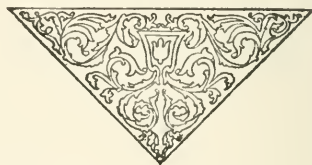
In one of her letters she says, “I can only secure a quiet moment by chance. Madame de Dangeau dines with me, and in all probability Madame d’Houdincourt also, who will request an explanation of our reason for not eating everything that is served up. I shall lose patience; she will blush at my irritation, and I shall follow her example. The Princesses who have not attended the hunt will come in, followed by their cabal, and wait the return of the King in my apartment in order to go to dinner. I shall take no more interest in these visitors that I inspire. The hunters will return in a crowd, and will relate the whole history of their day’s sport without sparing us a single detail. They will then go to dinner, and Madame de Dangeau

will challenge me, with a yawn, to a game of backgammon, etc. Such is the way in which people live at Court."

Superadded to these restraints and intrusions, the victim of her own ambition had also to endure the egotistical exactions and caprices of a Monarch who, "born under the purple" and accustomed to see his own convenience and comfort the care of all about him, had long ceased to perceive that they might prove inimical to the happiness of others. In the most dissipated years of his life, Louis XIV. had never sacrificed either his wishes or his vanity even to the indisposition of those to whom he professed himself to be the most passionately attached, let the cause of that indisposition be what it might. Whatever were their sufferings—and there is evidence that upon several occasions they were severe—he would exempt them neither from the fatigue of travelling nor from the etiquette of the Court. They must be full-dressed, covered with jewels, and tightly laced; dance, keep late hours, and always be ready to amuse him, or to start at a moment's notice upon any excursion which he proposed, without appearing to heed the cold, the heat, the wind, or the dust with which the carriage was constantly filled, because he was, as we have elsewhere remarked, partial to fresh air, and never would suffer the windows to be closed. One complaint of inconvenience sufficed to exclude the murmurer forever. He seldom permitted any one but ladies to enter his coach, which was always stored with fruits, meats, and pastry; and before the party were a league upon their way he invariably proposed that they

should partake of some refreshment. Although he himself never touched any food between his regular repasts, it afforded him great amusement to see others eat; and in order not to incur his displeasure, it was necessary to devour everything he offered—a necessity which was as imperative upon his own daughters and daughters-in-law as upon the ladies of the Court.\* MADemoisELLE, on more than one occasion, complains bitterly in her memoirs of the annoyance to which she was subjected by the immense quantities of food that she had been compelled to swallow while driving with the King.

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.





### CHAPTER III

Family Circle of Madame de Maintenon—The Count of Aubigné; His Excesses—The Truncheon in Specie—The Marriage-Promise—His Enforced Retirement; His Evasion—Marriage of the Duke of Lauzun—Disappointment of the Bride—Arrival of the Princess Adelaide of Savoy in France—Treaty of Riswick—Death of James II.—Household of the Future Duchess of Bourgogne—Indisposition of the King—Advantages of a Tête-à-tête—Premature Salutations—The Duchess of Lude—Reception of the Princess—The Court at Versailles—Letter to the Duchess of Savoy—Madame de Maintenon Educates the Princess; Her Docility—Return of Mademoiselle de Choin to Meudon; Her Supposed Marriage with the Dauphin; Her Harshness—Extravagant Preparations for the Marriage of the Duke of Bourgogne; His Portrait—The King's Ball—Court Felons—The Hat-Bearer—The Fatal Prophecy.

THE sufferings to which we have alluded in speaking of Madame de Maintenon were not, however, the only ones to which she was subjected; for the conduct of her brother, the Count of Aubigné, was a perpetual source of vexation and alarm; while that of her own family had been sufficiently ungracious throughout her early struggles to make her distrustful of their subsequent attachment. During her widowhood they had not only utterly neglected her, but treated her with absolute contempt; and it was not



until she had secured the friendship of the King that all her connections, even to the most remote degree, asserted their claims to relationship, and were to be found perpetually in her apartments. Among them were several petty Nobles of Angoumois and Poitou, who had resided all their lives upon their estates, and who differed only from the other landowners about them by the privilege of wearing a sword ; but there were also several who did no dishonour to her new rank. The Abbé d'Aubigné was one of these ; and Louis XIV. was so much pleased by his appearance and demeanour, that Père la Chaise hastened to bestow upon him the Archbishopric of Rouen, with the prospect of a Cardinalate, should Madame de Maintenon retain her influence.

Among her female relatives were the three daughters of the Count of Villette, who were all handsome and well bred, and a beautiful child, the only daughter of the Marquis de Villette, to whom she soon became greatly attached, as well as to her three brothers ; and this bevy of fair girls and graceful youths, who were constantly about her person, became the companions and playfellows of the legitimatised children of the King, and formed a little court of which Madame de Maintenon was justly proud.

The Count of Aubigné, her only brother, for whom she had a great affection, was her senior by several years, and she had no sooner begun to acquire some credit at Court than she exerted herself to advance his fortunes. He was a man of fine person and agreeable address, but his dissipation was unbounded, and, having been his own master from boyhood, he was

selfish and headstrong. His libertine habits had excited animadversion even in his youth, and at the age of fifty he still pursued the same unblushing career of vice. Through the interest of his sister, M. d'Aubigné was transferred from an obscure government to one of considerable importance, in which he made himself extremely popular, but where his extravagance so overwhelmed him with debt, that Madame de Maintenon was several times compelled to liberate him from his difficulties. At the gaming-table he was so notoriously reckless that, on one occasion, when the Duke of Vivonne, the brother of Madame de Montespan, on whom the King had conferred the dignity of Marshal of France, entered a saloon in which play was going forward, and remarked that the board was covered with gold, he exclaimed, as he crossed the threshold, "I will risk a wager that it is D'Aubigné who has favoured us with all this display; it is a magnificence worthy of him." To which remark the Count replied, carelessly, "You would gain your bet, for it is in truth myself who, as you see, have received my truncheon in specie."

The ready wit of M. d'Aubigné never forsook him; and one day when his sister, after her marriage, was complaining of the wretchedness of her destiny, and declaring that she wished she were dead, he answered, sarcastically, "In that case you must have been promised the hand of the Monarch of the universe."

This was precisely the description of person calculated to harass and alarm Madame de Maintenon; for his profligacy was unconcealed and his intemperance notorious, while, despite his public income, which was

very considerable, and his frequent drafts upon the treasury, he was always in want of money ; and she, ere long, came to the conclusion that he could only be reformed by starvation.

In consequence of this conviction, after having, for a score of times, confided in his promises of amendment, and supplied his necessities on the faith of those promises which had all been successively falsified, she resolved to withhold all further assistance ; and when he once more appeared before her she accordingly assumed a cold and reproachful demeanour, and informed him that the King was at last weary of his misconduct, which she had concealed from him as long as such a course had been possible, and that his Majesty now consented to pardon him only on condition that she would pledge herself that he should reform, or at least appear to do so, adding that she had given this pledge, and must consequently insist upon its fulfilment.

In reply, the Count assured her that his reformation was impossible ; but that, as regarded the affectation of amendment, he was quite ready to undertake it if she would point out the method : upon which Madame de Maintenon, affecting not to remark the sarcasm, suggested that he should withdraw from the Court for three weeks or a month, when she would spread a report of his conversion, and that he should meanwhile take up his residence with a M. Doyen, who had formed an establishment at St. Sulpice, where gentlemen of the first families in France lived as a common family, and devoted themselves to a life of charity and devotion under the direction of certain distinguished ecclesiastics.

This proposal was by no means palatable to the pleasure-loving M. d'Aubigné, but his case was desperate; and, as Madame de Maintenon finally promised him the sum of twenty-five thousand livres at the close of the month's penance, he consented to assume the appearance of profound remorse, and retired to St. Sulpice, after signing the rules enforced by the society, fully resolved that when he was once in possession of the money he would throw off the shackles with which his necessities had encumbered him.

Nor did he fail in his determination. On the very day which succeeded that in which he became the master of this new supply, he disappeared from the brotherhood of St. Sulpice; but this event had been foreseen; and M. Doyen had received an order, by virtue of which he again possessed himself of the person of the Count of Aubigné, and placed him under the charge of a priest, who, whenever he left the house, followed him like his shadow. One day the Count lost patience, and beat his keeper very severely, for which he was immediately condemned to close arrest for six weeks; and convinced at length that he should obtain nothing by violence, he found himself compelled to become more circumspect in his conduct, and thus relieved the harassed Madame de Maintenon from a great portion of her anxiety.

In the spring of 1695, M. de Lauzun, then sixty-three years of age, while assisting at the marriage of the Duke of St. Simon and the daughter of the Marshal of Lorges,\* became enamoured of the sister of the

\* Guy Aldonce de Durfort, Duke of Lorges, was the younger son of Guy Aldonce de Durfort, Marquis de Duras, and of Elisabeth de la

new Duchess, a girl of fifteen ; or at least endeavoured to persuade himself that he had done so, believing that by an alliance with a general officer, not only at the head of a distinct force, but also high in favour with the King, he might be enabled to obtain the restoration of his former rank as Captain of the Guard. With this conviction he lost no time in proposing his hand to Madame de Lorges, who at once rejected his suit, the known profligacy of the Duke, and the great disparity of age which existed between the parties, sufficing to convince her that, by acceding to such a marriage, she should inevitably sacrifice the happiness of a child whom she loved ; but M. de Lauzun never permitted himself to be dismayed by any obstacles, however apparently insurmountable ; and he accordingly repeated his proposition to the Marshal, offering to receive Mademoiselle de Quintin without any dower ; a consideration which commenced by making the father hesitate, and finally induced him to comply.

The poor Duchess was in despair, but she was powerless against the will of her husband ; while the affianced bride, dazzled by the rank and riches of her new suitor, and, moreover, persecuted by a former one to whom she was still more averse, consented without

Tour. He made his first campaign under Turenne, who was his maternal uncle, and raised himself by his services to the rank of Lieutenant-General. He served in this quality in the army of Turenne at the death of that great Captain ; and it was then that, on assuming the command, he effected the brilliant retreat which procured for him in the following year (1676) the dignity of Marshal of France. He afterwards commanded in Germany, took Heidelberg, and drove the Imperialists into Alsace. He died at the age of seventy-two years, captain of the body-guard, chevalier of the Orders of the King, and Governor of Lorraine. In 1700 the King raised the town of Quintin to a Duchy, under the title of Lorges-Quintin.











a murmur to the alliance, believing, as she subsequently confessed, that the advanced age of the Duke guaranteed to her married life only a brief interval of thralldom, at whose close she should find herself young, wealthy, and free to make a more consistent choice.

When the King was informed by M. de Lorges of the extraordinary son-in-law whom he had selected, should it be the pleasure of his Majesty to permit the marriage, Louis XIV. remarked coldly that the Marshal was a bold man to receive the Duke of Lauzun into his family, and that he trusted he might never have cause to repent of so doing ; but that, although he was at liberty to act as he saw fit, and to confide his own secrets to whomsoever he might choose to trust, he was possessed of no such privilege as regarded those of his Sovereign ; and that he would only sanction the marriage upon condition that he should pledge himself never to make the slightest communication to M. de Lauzun in which he was himself involved.

This somewhat ungracious sanction once obtained, the elderly Duke, whose personal history was fated to be a romance even to the end, urged the celebration of his nuptials with such precipitancy that the bridal party were not permitted time even to furnish themselves with new dresses and equipages. He remembered the fatal effects of his procrastination on a former occasion, and would not subject himself to a second mortification of the same description.

If it were indeed ambition which prompted this marriage on both sides, each party was fated to dis-

appointment; for to the period of his death Lauzun continued to be a mere hanger-on of that Court of which he had formerly been one of the most salient personages; while the Duchess was fated to wait until 1723 for the possession of that liberty to which she had aspired when she finally buried her husband at the age of ninety years.\*

In compliance with the treaty of Nôtre-Dame de Lorette, by which the Duke of Savoy bound himself to send his daughter Mary Adelaide, at the age of eleven years, to France—in order to complete her education, and ultimately to become the wife of the Duke of Bourgogne, the son of the Dauphin, and consequently the probable heir to the French throne—that Princess landed in her adopted country on the 16th October, 1696, and was conducted to the residence which had been prepared for her. Her new household had been awaiting her for six weeks at Lyons, when she arrived at the bridge of Beauvoisin, where she was to take leave of her Italian attendants; and on the second day after her landing she was accordingly separated from these familiar faces, with the exception of her physician and a solitary waiting-woman, and found herself in the midst of strangers; while even those two were only permitted to remain in her service until she was established at Versailles.

The general peace announced by the approaching arrival of the Princess of Savoy in France, had been signed three months previously at Riswick; and in the course of the following September, Louis XIV. had the mortification of finding himself compelled to

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.

abandon the interest of James II., and to recognise William of Orange as King of England. To the exiled Monarch, however, the usurpation of his son-in-law now personally brought little regret; for, as though he had only awaited the confirmation of the intelligence to depose his crown before he ceased to exist, he was shortly afterwards stricken with paralysis, and, although he still retained his mental faculties, his physical powers were prostrated.

At this fearful crisis, Louis XIV., forgetting for a time his systematic egotism, and desirous to fulfil to the last all the duties of a host, was unceasing in his attentions to the Royal sufferer, an example which was followed by all the Court. An attempt was made, by removing him to Bourbon-Archambault, to relieve, even if it were impossible to restore, the Royal sufferer; and he accordingly proceeded there, accompanied by the Queen, and receiving throughout the journey all the honours due to his rank; but the result was unsuccessful; and, a few days after his return to St. Germain, he fell into a state of torpor which announced his approaching dissolution.

On the 13th of September, when Louis XIV. visited his sick-bed, he had scarcely power to open his eyes on hearing him announced; but the French King, nevertheless, approached his pillow, and there solemnly assured him, in the presence of all his Court, that he might die in peace as regarded his son the Prince of Wales, whom he should immediately recognise as the Sovereign of Great Britain; a declaration which caused all the English nobility present to bend the knee, and earnestly express their gratitude; and, this ceremony

over, Louis XIV. proceeded to the apartment of the Queen, where he repeated the engagement into which he had entered, not only to herself, but also a third time to the Prince of Wales.

On the 16th September, at three o'clock in the afternoon, James II. breathed his last; and on the evening of the same day his body, almost unaccompanied, was conveyed to the convent of the English Benedictines at Paris; where, without any more ceremony than if it had been that of a private individual, it was placed in charge of the brotherhood, and consigned to a lateral chapel, until it could be transported to England.

The formation of the household of the future Duchess of Bourgogne had been a matter of some difficulty. The Court had long ceased to possess either Queen or Dauphiness, and all the ladies of high rank were anxious to seize so favourable an opportunity of securing office. Anonymous letters, slander, and false statements were rife; friendships were forgotten; rivalries were established, and Versailles awoke from its long trance into life and movement.

Louis XIV. had been, for some time, suffering very severely from a carbuncle in the neck, which had induced fever, and confined him to his bed; and during this attack Madame de Maintenon never quitted his side, save at the hours in which he persisted in transacting business, and thus had an admirable opportunity of privately arranging with the King all the details of the new establishment. She had at once resolved to be herself the principal instructress of the young Princess, and to educate her entirely in accord-

ance with her own peculiar principles; placing her sufficiently at her ease, however, to enable her to become an amusement to the Monarch, but reserving the greater portion of her affection to herself, in order that when she emerged from girlhood, she might not rival her in influence. She had also a hope that, through her means, she might be enabled hereafter to acquire a hold upon the feelings of the Duke of Bourgogne, and for this purpose she laboured to induce Louis XIV. to appoint none save persons who were in her own interests, or from whose intellect and personal qualities she would have nothing to apprehend, in which attempt she entirely succeeded.\*

At the very moment of the Princess's landing, when her household were presented to her, and she had already begun, according to the etiquette observed in the case of all merely foreign highnesses, to embrace the Duchess of Lude and the Count of Brienne, a courier arrived with an order from the King that the future Duchess was to be received with all the honours due to a Princess of the Blood Royal of France, and precisely as though she were already the wife of the Duke of Bourgogne. The embraces in consequence terminated abruptly, and no other individual than those already named were admitted to this familiarity.

In all the cities through which she passed she was welcomed by the authorities, and during the halts exacted by these ceremonies, she dined in public, waited upon by the Duchess of Lude, her lady of honour; but in the small towns all the ladies of her suite ate at her table. On the 4th of November, the

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.



King, the Dauphin, and *Monsieur*, went to Montargis in separate carriages to meet her; and at six in the evening when she arrived, she was received by Louis XIV., who himself assisted her to alight, and led her to her apartment, where he presented her to MONSEIGNEUR, *Monsieur*, and the Duke of Chartres.

The little Princess, who was full of animation and intelligence, had been admirably tutored by her father, and was quite conversant with the character of the King, and the principal personages of his Court, a knowledge of which she availed herself so skilfully, that she surprised and delighted all around her; while her high breeding, self-possession, innate dignity, and respectful deportment towards himself, at once secured the affections of the Monarch, who, during the whole of the following day, overwhelmed her with caresses, and in the evening despatched a courier to Madame de Maintenon to inform her how delighted he was with *their* granddaughter.

On the morrow the Royal party left Montargis, and at five o'clock arrived at Fontainebleau, where all the nobility were assembled on the horseshoe staircase to receive them, while the Court was thronged by the populace. When the carriages had drawn up, the King conducted the little Princess ("who looked," says St. Simon, "as though he had just taken her from his pocket") first to the tribune, and subsequently to the state apartments of the Queen-mother, which had been appropriated to her, and where *Madame* and all the ladies of the Court in full dress were awaiting her entrance. Louis XIV. himself introduced to her the principal among the Princes and Princesses of the

Blood, and then retired, after deputing *Monsieur* to present the other persons present, and to be careful that she embraced such among them as had a right to that honour.

This arrangement made, the Dauphin also retired; and *Monsieur*, placing himself beside the Princess, named to her in succession not only the other Princes and Princesses of the Blood, Dukes and Duchesses, Marshals of France and their wives, and such ladies as were entitled to the privilege of the *tabouret*, and whom he directed her to embrace, but also all the nobility, male and female, who were permitted to kiss the hem of her robe. This ceremony lasted two hours, after which the young stranger supped alone in her room, where she was subsequently visited by Madame de Maintenon and the Princess of Conti. The following day she, in her turn, paid her respects to *Monsieur* and *Madame* in their own apartments, and to the Dauphin in those of Madame de Conti, from all of whom she received costly presents; while, in addition to these, the King sent all the crown jewels to Madame de Mailly, her mistress of the robes, with an order that they might be made available for the adornment of the Princess.

Louis XIV. also ordained that she should be addressed only as "Princess"; that she should eat alone, waited upon as before by the Duchess of Lude; that she should receive only the ladies of her own household, and those expressly admitted by himself; that she should hold no Court, and that the Duke of Bour-gogne should only visit her once every fortnight, and his brothers once every month.

On the 8th of November the Court returned to Versailles, where the Princess took possession of the apartments of the late Queen, and all such persons of rank as had not proceeded to Fontainebleau were presented in their turn, while in a very short time she became the idol of the King and Madame de Maintenon ; whom, in default of any title of etiquette, she always addressed as " aunt," observing towards her, nevertheless, a respectful deference which added a new charm to her graceful and affectionate familiarity.

A letter written by Madame de Maintenon at this period to the Duchess of Savoy, enclosing that which she had herself received from the King when at Montargis, will suffice to prove the impression produced by the young Princess upon both the one and the other. " The King," it said, " is enchanted with her ; he expatiates on her deportment, her grace, her courtesy, her reserve, and her modesty ; and your Royal Highness is aware that he is not liberal of his praise. She has all the grace of girlhood, with the perfections of a more mature age. Her temper appears as perfect as her figure promises one day to become. She only requires to speak, in order to display the extent of her intellect. I dare not blend my own admiration with that which alone must be of value, but I cannot resist thanking your Royal Highness for giving us a child who, according to all appearance, will be the delight of the Court, and the glory of the century."\*

The establishment of St. Cyr was eminently serviceable to Madame de Maintenon in forming the mind and character of the Princess ; and she was fortunate

\*Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

enough to inspire a great affection for its inmates, among whom she selected such as she considered to be the most eligible companions for her new charge, with care and judgment. Here she accustomed the docile girl to visit the stores, where she became conversant with the details of the internal economy of the house; the novices' apartment, where she imbibed principles of devotion and humility, and the school-rooms, in which she pursued her studies, and appeared delighted to escape from the trammels of her rank; performing all her duties, assisting those of others, and unlearning the vanity and indolence of Versailles.

In order, however, not to discourage or disgust the Princess, by depriving her entirely of the pleasures suited to her youth, the theatrical representations of St. Cyr were resumed; and Madame de Maintenon even carried her complaisance so far as to have a miniature stage erected in her own apartment, where the future Duchess, and the Duke of Orleans, performed in the company of such members of the Court as possessed the talents of representation, under the direction of the famous actor Bâron.\* Most of the tragedies of Duché,† the King's valet-de-chambre, were written

\* Michel Bayron, otherwise Bâron, was a celebrated actor, and was alike the pupil and the friend of Molière. As an artist he appreciated himself most highly. "Every century," he was wont to say, "may produce a Cæsar, but it requires ten thousand to give birth to a Bâron." As an author he was less distinguished, although he wrote seven comedies, of which the best was *The Libertine*. He died in the year 1729, at the age of eighty-two.

† Joseph Francis Duché de Vancy was a prolific poet, who never permitted himself to indulge in any satirical compositions, and was admitted a member of the Academy of Inscriptions. He left behind him three tragedies, *Jonathan*, *Absalom*, and *Deborah*, besides two ballets and three operas, of which the music was composed by Desmarais.

for this little theatre, while the Abbé Genêt,\* the almoner of the Duchess of Chartres, wrote those which were enacted by the Duchess of Maine and her Court.†

As the Princess advanced in age, and that the period of her marriage approached, Madame de Maintenon substituted for these girlish companions persons of more advanced age and refined minds, and thenceforth forbore all reprimands ; but whenever she had failed in any of her duties, she was warned of the fact by the assumed gravity of those about her, while their evident satisfaction on every occasion upon which she had acquitted herself with credit excited her to renewed exertion. Absent or present, Madame de Maintenon always interposed her influence to protect her against the evil examples of the Court, and was unceasingly occupied in endeavouring to strengthen the happy dispositions with which she had been endowed by nature.

Louis XIV., more and more infatuated by the grace and amiability of the young Princess, became at length so impatient for the marriage, that he decided upon its taking place on the day upon which she attained her twelfth year ; and a short time previously he expressed his desire that the festivities should be of the most splendid description, and the Court appear in its greatest magnificence, declaring that he should him-

\* Charles Claudius Genêt, legal secretary of the Duke of Maine, and member of the French Academy. His principal works are *Principles of Philosophy, or Natural Proofs of the Existence of God, and the Immortality of the Soul*; *Poems*; and several *Tragedies*, of which that of *Penelope* was esteemed his best.

† Le Siècle de Louis XIV.

self, upon this occasion, discard his usual dress, and wear the most sumptuous apparel.

This intimation was sufficient for the courtiers ; and forthwith all who were to attend the ceremony, or who were included in the invitations, began to raise money by every means in their power, in order to fulfil his wishes. Gold and silver embroideries were discarded to make room for wreaths and bouquets of precious stones ; tissues and velvets were scarcely esteemed worthy of selection ; every jeweller in Paris disposed of his diamonds and pearls at a price never before contemplated ; and the profusion finally became so unmeasured, that the King himself was alarmed by its excess, and declared that he could not understand how husbands were mad enough to suffer themselves to be ruined by the folly of their wives. It was, however, too late to counteract an evil of which he had been the original cause, and which had become so perfect an epidemic that workmen were at length wanting to execute the orders that poured in upon them. In this emergency the Duchess of Bourbon-Condé, who acknowledged no law save that of her own will, conceived the idea of carrying off eight individuals who were employed by the Duke of Rohan, in order that her own costume might be completed ; but the King was no sooner informed of the circumstance than he caused them immediately to be restored.

The anticipation of this marriage aroused the Court from its lethargy. The prospect of novelty was refreshing after a constant routine of amusements which had long become wearisome, and which had consisted of a monotonous succession of cards, drives, hunts, and



concerts, and presented none of those agreeable varieties which excited the emulation of the courtiers and gratified the curiosity of the people.

The Dauphin lived at Meudon in the same uniform manner as the King existed at Versailles ; and Mademoiselle Choin, whom he had liberated from her convent despite the efforts which had been made to estrange his regard, enacted at his Court the same personage as Madame de Maintenon presented at that of Louis XIV. Their marriage was, even after the death of the Dauphin, never clearly substantiated ; but it is asserted that on one occasion, when the Prince was conversing with his father, he so far conquered his constitutional timidity as to enlarge upon the good qualities of Mademoiselle Choin, and on discovering that by so doing he excited neither surprise nor displeasure, terminated his eulogium by requesting permission to make her his wife ; upon which the King, as he abruptly turned away and retired into his cabinet, desired him to consider well what he was about to do, and never again to speak to him upon the subject.\*

That the Dauphin profited by this forbearance there can be little doubt ; for some time subsequently Mademoiselle Choin occupied an armchair at Meudon in the presence of the Prince himself, while the Princesses were simply accommodated with folding seats ; and it was remarked that she not only addressed the Duchess of Bourgogne familiarly, but even harshly, occasionally contradicting her, and taking exception at her dress, her manner, or her conduct, with the same cool and caustic authority which Madame de Maintenon

\* Mémoires de la Beaumelle.



had previously exercised over the daughters of the King. The actual position of Mademoiselle Choin was, however, still more clearly defined during a dangerous illness which occurred to the Dauphin, when she established herself by his bedside, with the full knowledge and concurrence of the King; who, far from condemning this public demonstration, and commanding her to leave the palace, as was usual upon such occasions, requested Madame de Maintenon to visit her during the progress of the indisposition.†

The Duke of Bourgoyne was at this period in his fifteenth year, and was the ward of the Duke of Beauvilliers, and the pupil of Fénélon, who had, in devoting themselves to his education, undertaken a task of no common difficulty, the young Prince having been born with natural dispositions which caused all about him to tremble for the results. Passionate to a degree which induced him to destroy the clocks when they struck the hour that compelled him to some occupation to which he was averse, and to throw himself into the most violent paroxysms of rage if the rain chanced to interfere with his amusements, all opposition rendered him furious, and only tended to increase his desire for whatever was interdicted. Earnest and eager in the pursuit of all that bore the name of pleasure, he equally loathed everything which involved restraint or submission. With a keen perception of the ridiculous, he was merciless in his raillery, which wounded the more cruelly from the wit and spirit with which it was universally applied, while, impatient to impetuosity, he never, during his boyhood, succeeded in learning

† Mémoires de St. Simon.

anything singly, but endeavoured, by attempting several studies at the same time, to master them all by one common exertion. His most dangerous quality was, however, the pride which he felt in the facility with which he was enabled to seize the weak point of an argument, and to embarrass his tutors by captious questions; but he had no sooner succeeded in so doing than, conscious of the want of generosity of which he had been guilty, he was the first to expatiate upon the unworthiness of his conduct, and to upbraid himself with a violence even more culpable than his original fault.

Nevertheless, despite all these imperfections, his keen and searching intellect, his perseverance against difficulty, and his ambition to become an accomplished gentleman, enabled him to complete his education with the most brilliant results, while religion and matured reason rendered him in after years the very reverse of what he had been in his boyhood, and made him as remarkable for his virtues as he had formerly been for his defects.\*

The marriage of the young and Royal pair took place on the 7th of December, and was celebrated with the greatest magnificence in the chapel of Versailles at six o'clock in the evening. The little Princess already gave promise of the fascination which subsequently rendered her so eminently attractive, and possessed a figure which was rapidly becoming tall and majestic, large eyes of the most brilliant black, an animated Italian physiognomy, and the charming complexion of early youth.

\* *Mémoires de St. Simon.*

The personal appearance of the Duke was less prepossessing; for he was plain, and moreover deformed. The Duke of Beauvilliers, his governor, accounted for this defect by imputing it to the use of an iron bar which he had been compelled to carry while a youth, in order to make him upright, but to avoid whose weight he had thrown himself on one side, and thus engendered a habit which had ultimately destroyed his figure.

The Court festivals consequent upon this premature marriage exceeded in magnificence all that had been previously witnessed at Versailles; but the rejoicings did not extend beyond the gates of the palace. The people looked with a jealous and reproachful eye upon the lavish expenditure and reckless profusion of the aristocracy, and remembered, as they listened to the chiming of bells and the booming of cannon, that the peace which had so recently been concluded had somewhat shorn the glory of Louis XIV. of its beams; and thus, while the courtiers were intoxicating themselves with pleasure, the inhabitants of Paris remained serious and impassive.

Little, however, did the glittering tenants of Versailles care to remark a fact so unimportant; and during several weeks the long avenue conducting to the Capital was alive by night as well as day with gilded equipages, prancing steeds, and blazing torches, while, within the palace, plays, concerts, operas, balls, and lotteries followed each other in quick succession. Three days after the marriage the King himself held an assembly, where the sumptuousness of the costumes was carried to an extreme hitherto unattempted.

The courtiers as well as the ladies were covered with jewels, while, in order that the diamonds of the Court dames might produce a more dazzling effect, it was decided that they should all appear in dresses of black velvet; and the result of this arrangement in the great gallery of Versailles, illuminated on that occasion by four thousand wax-lights, was of the most striking and magnificent description. The young Duchess of Bourgogne, the heroine of the festival, wore jewels to the amount of ten thousand pistoles upon her apron alone.

The ball was succeeded by a collation of so costly a description as to prove that neither adverse seasons nor ungenial climates can withstand the power of gold. A number of tables, which were transported as if by magic into the gallery, presented to the delighted eyes of the wondering guests a variety of flower-beds redolent of the rarest and richest blossoms, while others supported trees covered with exotic fruits, whence escaped at intervals flights of singing birds. This ingenious representation of the two brightest seasons of the year, was followed by the apparition of a hundred movable sideboards, covered with every delicacy that could tempt the palate; and the attendants upon these accumulated dainties were already in full activity, when it was discovered that among the guests of Majesty were comprised certain individuals who, more keenly alive to the delights of gain than to the indulgence of epicureanism, were possessing themselves of the jewels of their neighbours to an excess which threatened to create considerable consternation among the losing party.

The mortification of Louis XIV., upon being apprised of this disgraceful fact, was extreme; and he forthwith desired a number of the noblemen present to disperse themselves among the crowd, in order, if possible, to detect the delinquents; and shortly afterwards the Chevalier de Sully, chancing to be attracted by the movements of a gorgeously-attired individual, who was, as he remarked, constantly endeavouring to force himself through the very centre of the throng, determined to watch his proceedings; nor was it long ere he observed him in the act of cutting away a portion of the dress of the young Princess, in order to possess himself of a diamond clasp by which it was ornamented. M. de Sully lost no time in beckoning to his assistance a couple of his coadjutors; when, without troubling themselves to ascertain the identity of their captive, the three young men hurried their prisoner to the private closet of the King, according to their instructions, and immediately hastened to inform his Majesty of the result of their zeal; upon which Louis XIV. himself retired for an instant from the glittering crowd, and, upon entering his cabinet, was painfully startled to find himself confronted with one of the greatest nobles of his Court.

The dialogue which ensued between the offended Monarch and the dishonoured courtier was cold and brief; and was at length terminated by Louis XIV., who said, contemptuously, "Enough, sir, more than enough; I perceive that you desired to wear the costly attire in which you now stand gratuitously. Leave the palace on the instant; I at once despise and pardon you."

Another instance also occurred during these marriage festivities which is too characteristic to be passed over in silence. Among the diversions of the time few were followed up with more zest than the gaming-table; and it chanced that on one occasion, in the Royal apartments, MONSEIGNEUR played with so extraordinary a run of good fortune that he at length turned laughingly to the Marquis d'Antin,\* and desired him to seat himself at his side, and to hold his hat, in order that he might endeavour to fill it.

This arrangement was no sooner made in the same jesting spirit as it had been conceived, than the Dauphin, whose luck appeared exhaustless, began to throw the gold by handfuls into his plumed beaver; but after he had passed about half an hour in this pleasant occupation, he was astonished to perceive that, despite all his exertions, the improvised purse was not more than a quarter full. "I thought I had been richer," was his remark, as he resumed his cards. "However, we will continue our game."

Fortune still favoured the Dauphin, but the hoard did not visibly increase; and, finally, MONSEIGNEUR, having turned round somewhat suddenly, saw the Marquis busy in transferring the glittering coins from the Royal hat to his own pockets; he, however, made no observation on the circumstance, but shortly afterwards rose from the table, exclaiming, "That will suffice for to-night; and now let me see what I have won."

So saying, he led M. d'Antin into the recess of a window, and striking upon the pockets of the delinquent with the back of his hand, he heard the

\* The legitimate son of the Marquis de Montespan.

pleasant sound of his own gold pieces; upon which he remarked, with somewhat ironical gayety, "Thank you, my good fellow; you were right to fill your pockets, for assuredly my hat could not have held all my gains."

The son of the discarded favourite profited by the forbearance of the good-natured Prince, disgorged his ill-gotten hoard, and escaped without the additional mortification of a public exposure.

From the first moment in which the Duke of Bourgogne saw the Princess, Marie-Adelaide, he became warmly attached to her, and subsequently carried this love almost to adoration. Some days after his marriage, during one of the visits which he was authorised by the King to make his bride, she confided to him the fact that a celebrated astrologer of Turin, who had drawn her horoscope, had foretold everything that had since occurred to her, even that she should marry a French Prince; and that he had concluded by predicting that she would die in her twenty-seventh year.

"And if I should indeed be so unfortunate," said the little Princess, "who shall you next marry, sir?"

"It is useless speculation," answered the young Duke; "for if you die before me I shall not survive you a week."

He was as true a prophet as the Turinese astrologer.

The Duchess of Bourgogne increased in personal graces and amiability of character as she advanced in years, and became, like the unfortunate Henrietta of England, at once the idol and the model of the Court,



while all the nation anticipated at a future period such a government under her husband as should realise the dreams of antiquity.

They were ignorant of the prophecy.





## CHAPTER IV

The Spanish Succession—Death of Leopold of Bavaria—The Duke of Anjou Called to the Throne of Spain—Declaration of Innocent XII.—Death of Charles II. of Spain—Reading of the Will—The Duke of Abrantes—Presentation of the Duke of Anjou to the French Court as King of Spain—Leave-Taking at Meudon—Madame de Montespan and the King—Literary Deaths at the Close of the Seventeenth Century—Racine's Last Mistake—Jean Baptiste Rousseau—Birth of Voltaire.

CHARLES II. of Spain, whose health was broken, and who was hopeless of an heir, had selected as his successor Leopold of Bavaria, a Prince of five years of age; and his will was no sooner made, than the Cardinal Porto-Carrero secretly informed the Marquis d'Harcourt, the French Ambassador, of the fact, who immediately despatched a messenger to Louis XIV. with the intelligence. The King learned this decision without exhibiting any symptoms of annoyance; but the Emperor of Germany was less philosophic. The Court of Austria had already been accused of ridding itself, by poison, of the Queen of Spain, the daughter of *Monsieur*, and it was no sooner announced that the young Prince of Bavaria had followed her to the grave than the same accusations were renewed.

At the death of the infant Prince, Charles found himself more embarrassed than before, when Porto-Carrero suggested to him the substitution of Philip d'Anjou, the brother of the Duke of Bourgogne, and grandson of the King of France; but the Monarch feared to take upon himself the responsibility of bequeathing his kingdom to the descendant of a sovereign who had publicly renounced his claims to the succession on his marriage with a Spanish Princess, and resolved to consult the Pope before he ventured such a measure.

Innocent XII., who was at that period in a dying state, replied upon the instant, stating that being, like his Catholic Majesty, suffering from a mortal illness, he had an interest as great and as imperative as his own, in giving him such advice as should exempt him from all reproach at the awful tribunal before which he must soon appear, and considered that, to the exclusion of the house of Austria, the children of the Dauphin of France were the true, only, and legitimate heirs to his monarchy; that they superseded all others; and that so long as they or any of their posterity were in existence, no Austrian had any claim to the Spanish throne, while the more considerable the inheritance, the more he was bound not to commit the crime of alienating it from the legitimate heir, and that he consequently entreated him not to omit any precaution to insure justice to those to whom it was due; but to secure, in so far as it was possible, the undivided succession of his monarchy to one of the French Princes.

This negotiation was conducted with so much

secrecy that it was only after the accession of Philip V. that the interference of the Pope became public.

On the receipt of so positive a reply, all the scruples of Charles II. were removed. His previous will was immediately burned in the presence of his confessor, and a new one was drawn up, wherein Philip of Anjou was declared absolute heir to the crown and kingdom of Spain; which, in the event of his demise, were to devolve to the Duke of Berri, the third son of the Dauphin; and, he failing, to the Archduke Charles; with the reservation as regarded the first two that they should not unite in their own persons the Sovereignities of France and Spain; and in that of the third, that he should renounce all claim to the Empire of Germany if he ever became heir to the Spanish throne; while it was, moreover, finally decreed, that if, by any extraordinary concatenation of events, neither of these three Princes should be enabled to claim the bequest of Charles II., it should devolve upon the Duke of Savoy without any restriction whatever.

The precaution was well timed; for shortly afterwards Charles lost the use of his faculties, and the Duke of Harcourt received orders to depart from Madrid, leaving M. de Blécourt as chargé d'affaires to defend the French interests at that Court, and to proceed to Barcelona, where a body of troops had already been stationed, ready at the first signal to march into Spain.

On the 1st of November Charles II. expired, and he was no sooner ascertained to be dead than his will was opened. The secret of the succession had been

so scrupulously kept, that the mystery and importance of the event which was about to occur had attracted all the inhabitants of the city to the palace and its neighbourhood. Every foreign Minister had exerted his interest to be admitted to the Council ; all the doors, both public and private, were besieged alike by Ambassadors and courtiers ; and every one was anxious to be the foremost to proclaim the important tidings.

The first person who left the apartment in which the will had been opened was the Duke of Abrantes, who, after having looked around him for an instant on the anxious faces by which the anterooms were thronged, said, gravely, "Gentlemen, the Duke of Anjou is now King of Spain. Long live Philip V.!"

And then making his way through the astonished crowd, he disappeared.

On the morning of the 9th of November the despatch of M. de Blécourt was delivered to the Marquis de Barbesieux, who immediately proceeded to communicate its contents to Louis XIV. The King, who was preparing for a shooting excursion, countermanded his orders, and, without making any remark, retired to his cabinet, after which he dined alone as usual, simply announcing, during the repast, that he had received intelligence of the death of the King of Spain, in consequence of which there would be neither drawing-rooms, theatrical representations, nor any other amusement at Court throughout the winter ; but he had no sooner concluded his repast than he sent to desire that the Minister would wait upon him at three o'clock in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon,

while a second summons was forwarded to the Dauphin.

The Council sat till seven o'clock; after which the King transacted business for three hours with two of the Ministers.

On the following day two more councils were held in the same apartment, and even habituated as the Court had become to the favour of Madame de Maintenon, it was not without surprise that they saw her thus almost publicly assist at a deliberation upon the most important subject which, throughout the extended reign of Louis XIV., had been submitted to a Council of State.

All, however, remained in mystery and doubt until the morning of the 14th, when the Ambassador of Spain was summoned to an audience at Versailles on the following day, where the King presented his grandson to him in his cabinet saying, "This, sir, is the Duke of Anjou, whom you may salute as your King."

At this announcement the Ambassador flung himself upon his knees, and made a long harangue to the young Prince in his native tongue, at the conclusion of which Louis XIV. remarked, courteously, "My grandson, sir, does not yet understand your language, which will so soon become his own; I must therefore reply to you in his name;" and as he ceased speaking, contrary to his usual custom, he ordered that both the battants of the door should be thrown back, and permitted all who were in the saloon to enter his cabinet. The crowd was consequently great, for the whole Court was in a state of excitement and curiosity;

and order was no sooner restored than the Monarch, throwing his left arm about the neck of the young Prince, and pointing towards him with his right hand, said, in a tone of emotion : —

“Gentlemen, this is the King of Spain. His birth called him to a crown ; the late King has recognised this right by his will ; all the nation desires his succession, and has entreated it at my hands. It is the will of Heaven, to which I conform with satisfaction.”

Then turning towards his grandson, he addressed him emphatically with the words—“Be a good Spaniard ; but nevertheless, although this will henceforth be your first duty, never forget that you were born a Frenchman, in order to maintain the union of the two nations. It is the only means whereby you will render them happy and maintain the peace of Europe.”

This done, the two younger Princes\* were introduced, when they embraced each other several times with tears in their eyes, and every evidence of sincere affection.

Their grief was, however, of short duration ; for the Duke of Anjou, delighted to be liberated at the age of seventeen from the restraints to which he had been previously subjected, no sooner found himself once more alone with his brothers than he abandoned himself to the most exuberant gayety, and expressed his delight at the prospect which had opened before him. “So I am King of Spain !” he exclaimed, joyously, “and my brother Burgundy will be one day King of France. You are the only one, my poor Berri, who must live and die a subject.”

\* The Duke of Bourgogne and the Duke of Berri.



"That fact will not grieve me," replied the little Prince; "I shall have less trouble and more pleasure than either of you, with the right of hunting both in France and Spain, and following a wolf from Paris to Madrid."

A few days subsequently the Spanish Ambassador received a letter, which he communicated to a select number of his friends, and which contained the intelligence that a month before his death Charles II. had conceived a melancholy desire to see once more the remains of his father, his mother, and his first wife, the unfortunate Maria Louisa of Orleans. In vain did the Court physicians expostulate, and represent to the Monarch the fatal effects which might be consequent upon such a spectacle in his impaired state of health; the influence of this morbid longing was too powerful to be controlled, and the tombs of the three illustrious personages whom he indicated were accordingly opened—a fact which was no sooner announced to Charles than, leaning upon the arm of the Cardinal Porto-Carrero, supported on the other side by the Count of Monterey, and followed by his confessor, he slowly proceeded towards the gloomy vault tenanted by his ancestors.

The way wound down an almost imperceptible slope, arched overhead, and along this highroad to the faded glories of the past, the Monarch, who was so soon to lay down his own among them, passed slowly and feebly forward, with trembling knees and labouring breath, sinking beneath a vague sense of terror which numbed the slight remains of his already failing strength; but at length the pilgrimage was ended, and

he stood among the shadows of spent centuries—among shivered sceptres and broken shields. A score of enamelled lamps, suspended above the long line of monuments, surmounted by their kneeling or reclining effigies, cast a pale and sepulchral gleam over the sculptured marble; and a close and fetid odour—that savour of death which not even the gums of Arabia or the spices of the East can wholly counteract, and which breathes into the nostrils of the living the atmosphere of mortality—appeared to float about the pendent lights, and to cling in vapoury clouds around the lofty tombs.

Charles II., panting, pale, and awestruck, ultimately paused before a sarcophagus indicated by his confessor, who said, in a hoarse whisper, "Sire, you desired to look once more upon Philip IV. He lies before you."

The dying King bent for an instant over the withered body of his father ere he gasped out, "May your rest be indeed as deep as it appears. Perchance I may have irritated your spirit by bequeathing inconsiderately the kingdom which I inherited from your hand. Speak, Philip! are you satisfied with me?"

"Charles!" exclaimed the stern monk at his side, "beware of sacrilege. Ask no questions of the dead. Silence is the privilege of the tomb, which must speak only to the eyes and to the soul. Its best lesson is that example of the nothingness of human vanity which you now see before you. Profit by it, and pray."

"I humble myself before God," replied the King,

submissively ; and then, after having embraced the remains of his father, he murmured, " now lead me to my mother."

" She sleeps beneath this arch," said the confessor.

Again Charles bent down to gaze upon a dead parent ; but this time he started back appalled, and covering his eyes with his hands, gasped out, " Merciful heavens ! she yet scowls upon me ! Her face still bears the impress of the anger with which she first heard me aver that I was about to transfer the sceptre of Spain to her own family, unhappily become her enemies. Mother, forgive me ! I had indeed obeyed your will ; but the Prince of Bavaria is now, like yourself, the tenant of a tomb. Farewell, mother ! may your troubled spirit be appeased." And the unfortunate Prince pressed his pale lips to the fleshless cheek of the skeleton, ere he turned towards the next tomb before which his confessor paused.

It was that of the ill-fated Maria Louisa of Orleans, who had been cut off in her youth, her beauty, and her tenderness, by the hand of a secret assassin, and who now lay wasted and ghastly in her shroud. " And this, then," said Charles, as he lifted from the livid brow a portion of its velvet covering, " this, then, is all that is left of the loveliness by which I was once thrall'd ! —of the wife who was once my idol !" As he continued to gaze earnestly upon the moldering remains, a convulsive shudder passed over his frame ; and raising himself suddenly, he asked, in a hoarse whisper, " Who talked of poison ? "

" No one, decidedly, sire," eagerly answered the Cardinal with a blenched lip. " In the name of Heaven

let me entreat your Majesty to leave this place, and return to the palace."

"No, no," said Charles, whose agitation visibly increased, "I heard the word distinctly; a fearful reproach was murmured from the coffin of my wife. Leave me to tell her how I loved her—how I mourned for her—let me embalm her cold remains with my tears, and yield up my own spirit by her side."

"Forget not that, although a Monarch, you are still a Christian," said his confessor, in a cold, hard accent which formed a strange contrast with the impassioned anguish of the unhappy King; "profane not the dwelling of the dead with the thoughts and the words of sin;" and he grasped the arm of his penitent to lead him away.

"Close the tomb of my mother!" exclaimed Charles, as he shook off the clasp, and raised himself to his full height; "I will look on her no more. Maria Louisa! victim of hate—of poison. Ah, close my mother's tomb!" And as he repeated these words in a faint scream, exhausted by sickness, fatigue, and emotion, he fell senseless over an empty sarcophagus which yawned cold and void beside him.

"It is his own," said the monk, unmoved by the melancholy spectacle; while the Cardinal, raising the insensible Monarch in his arms, desired the attendants to bear him carefully from the vault; and a few moments subsequently the melancholy procession retrod the gloomy passage even more silently than it had been previously traversed, and conveyed Charles to the chamber which he was never again to leave with life. In another month he lay in the narrow tomb

which had before received him for an instant in mimic death.\*

This letter created considerable sensation in the circle to which it was confided, but it was soon forgotten amid newer and gayer interests; for ere long the Court was in movement, preparing for the departure of Philip V. to assume his new throne, which it was determined by Louis XIV. should take place early in December, under the escort of his brothers, who had requested and obtained permission to accompany him to the frontier; while he was to be, moreover, attended by the Duke of Beauvilliers and the Marshal of Noailles, together with the greater portion of the young nobility, who all claimed the privilege of rendering him this last honour.†

It was, however, previously arranged that on the second of the month the boy King should proceed to Meudon to take a formal leave of his father, a ceremony at which all the Court of the Dauphin were commanded to be present.

The Duchess of Maine, the natural sister of MONSEIGNEUR, who possessed great influence over his mind, entreated him to invite Madame de Montespan to join the circle on this occasion, and to take leave of the King of Spain with the rest of the Court, a request which the Dauphin readily conceded, as it enabled him to effect two measures that were equally agreeable to his feelings: to oblige the Duchess, and to annoy Madame de Maintenon, whom he had not only never received as his guest, but into whose apartment he had

\* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

† Mémoires de St. Simon.

never entered, save on the solitary occasion when he was compelled to attend the Council.

Madame de Montespan had for several years entirely disappeared from the Court, where her apparition had become a reproach, and, consequently, an annoyance to the King, and where she had never received any encouragement to present herself; but her curiosity was so much excited by all that she heard of the Duchess of Bourgogne, and she was so anxious to be brought into immediate contact with her, that she at once accepted the invitation, and prepared to attend the ceremony.

In compliance with the established etiquette, a list of the persons who were present at Meudon was delivered to the Monarch on his arrival, which he read attentively throughout, after which he folded the paper with a look of perfect indifference, and thrust it into his pocket.

As the guards, by whom he was always preceded, announced him at the door of the apartment, Madame de Montespan tottered, and was anxious to withdraw; but she was restrained by one of her friends, and at that precise moment the young Duchess of Bourgogne, who was probably anxious to observe the effect which the sight of his old favourite would produce upon the King, approached the Duchess of Maine, who was seated beside her mother, and entered into conversation with her.

In the next instant Louis XIV. entered the room. He first addressed himself to the Spanish Minister, who was in attendance upon his new Sovereign, and having so done he made the tour of the apartment,

and requested the ladies to resume their seats ; then, pausing before the Duchess of Bourgogne, he conversed with her for a moment, subsequently addressed a few words to the Duchess of Maine, and ultimately found himself opposite Madame de Montespan, who, pale and trembling, had great trouble to prevent herself from fainting. The King looked at her steadfastly for a moment, and then, with a courteous gesture, calmly said, " I congratulate you, madam : you are still as handsome and as attractive as ever, but that is not all ; I hope that you are also happy."

" At this moment, sire," replied the discarded favourite, " I am very happy, since I have the honour of presenting my respectful homage to your Majesty."

As she ceased speaking, the King took her hand and pressed it to his lips ; after which he continued his progress round the circle.

This was the last time that Madame de Montespan ever saw Louis XIV.\*

Meanwhile all the European powers, with the exception of Austria, had recognised the Duke of Anjou as King of Spain, and he had been proclaimed at Madrid amid the acclamations of the people.

At the close of the seventeenth century, France found herself shorn of much of her intellectual splendour. In 1662 she had lost Boisrobert, in 1666 Mansard, in 1684 Corneille, in 1688 Quinault, in 1695 La Fontaine, in 1696 La Bruyère, in 1699 Racine, and in 1700 Le Nôtre. Of these celebrated men, many had, however, already outlived their favour. Bois-

\* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.



robert, the favourite of Richelieu, a sensualist to the last, passed out of the world almost unnoticed; Mansard, of whose pretensions the King had long been weary, was not only unregretted, but afforded a welcome relief to the whole Court by his decease; Corneille, whose fine powers had become extinguished by extreme old age, had for years ceased to appear in the world; Quinault, who had been the originator of the lyrical drama in France, died in peace, richly pensioned, and a member of the Academy; La Fontaine, after having by his improvidence rendered himself dependent on his friends for the space of more than twenty years, put forth a public protest against his *Tales*, and other immoral productions, expired in a state of intellectual childishness, and was discovered to have worn a shirt of haircloth under his linen; La Bruyère, the celebrated moralist, who had been historical tutor to Louis de Bourbon, the grandson of the great Condé, in whose household he remained until his death, and where he published his celebrated "*Characters*," was received into the Academy in 1693, and when at Paris in 1696, suddenly discovered, while surrounded by an assemblage of learned men, that he had totally lost his hearing, upon which he returned instantly to Versailles; but he had not been a quarter of an hour in his apartment when apoplexy supervened, and he became a corpse.\*

Three years subsequently, La Bruyère was followed to the tomb by Racine, whose death is asserted to have been hastened by an imprudence, through which he forfeited forever the joint favour of the Monarch and

\* Œuvres de l'Abbé d'Olivet.

Madame de Maintenon, at a period when he had become so utterly dependent upon Court popularity that he could not survive its loss—an incident which is thus related by cotemporaneous chroniclers.

The office of historiographer to the King, which he held conjointly with Despraux, and the facilities which it afforded him of securing the friendship of all the most distinguished of the nobility, had acquired for Racine what were then designated great *privacies* at Court, so much so indeed, that (as we have elsewhere recorded) when he had no public business to transact, Louis XIV., during the long evenings of winter, frequently desired the attendance of the dramatist in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, in order that he might report to him the progress of the work upon which he was then engaged, and amuse him by his conversation.

Unfortunately for the courtier poet, he was, like many others of his craft, subject to occasional fits of absence; and it chanced that in one of these confidential discourses, the King, after having questioned him upon the state of the opera until the topic was exhausted, turned to that of the general drama, and inquired if he could assign any cause for its visible decline in Paris. Racine, who did not dare to confess that the fact of his Majesty having himself abandoned the theatres had destroyed much of the emulation which had previously existed, cited several reasons for the defalcation; and among others the paucity of living dramatists, which, he wound up his argument by declaring, had compelled the managers to fall back upon exhausted pieces, and particularly upon the

farces of Scarron, which were good for nothing, and disgusted all their audiences.

As the words escaped his lips, the blood mounted to the brow of Madame de Maintenon, before whom the name of her late husband had not been pronounced during the last fifteen years; while the King was so startled, and remained silent for so long a period, that the unfortunate poet, on looking up, and perceiving the consternation which was visible upon both countenances, suddenly became conscious of his indiscretion, and dropped his eyes in the most painful confusion.

After a few seconds passed in this mental torture, he was, however, released by the Monarch himself, who coldly remarked that M. Racine was at liberty to withdraw, as he had some business to transact, and wished to be alone, an order which was no sooner given than the dramatist, so bewildered that he scarcely retained sufficient self-possession to make his parting obeisances, hurriedly left the apartment, to reflect in solitude upon the probable consequences of his ill-timed abstraction.

There was, however, no remedy for such an imprudence, and thenceforward the King not only excluded Racine from his confidence and favour, but to the day of his death neither himself nor Madame de Maintenon ever again honoured him by a word or even a look; while from that moment the poet, to whom Court favour had been for many years the very keystone of existence, fell into a state of melancholy which ultimately brought him to the grave.

The next man of celebrity who "shuffled off the

mortal coil" was Le Nôtre, while Boileau, Jean Baptiste Rousseau, and Fénelon alone remained, of all the bright galaxy which had illuminated the intellectual horizon during the youth of Louis XIV. ; and even of these, Boileau was only destined to survive until the year 1711, while Jean Baptiste Rousseau, although he lived forty years longer, was yet dead to France.

The life of this unfortunate poet was one long and melancholy romance. Gifted with poetical powers of a high order, he had scarcely emerged from college when he acquired a great reputation, which was, however, counterbalanced by a host of enemies, some of whom finally accused him as the writer of some libellous verses ; of which he, however, affirmed that Saurin was the actual author. It would appear, nevertheless, that he failed in procuring proofs of the fact ; for, on the trial which ensued, he was convicted of having suborned his witnesses, and for this crime was banished for life in 1712.

Pursued by misfortune, he for a time dragged on a miserable existence, first in Switzerland, where his only friend was the Count of Luc, the French Ambassador ; then at Vienna, under the protection of Prince Eugène, and finally at Brussels, where he died in extreme poverty, declaring in his last moments that he was innocent of the libel which had been attributed to him.

The author of *Telemachus* had, meanwhile, long preceded him to the grave, having died in 1712 at his diocese, full of years and virtues, regretted alike for his high talent and his universal charity ; and to re-

place all these great names, only one star of magnitude had arisen on the intellectual horizon ; but it was that of Voltaire, whose birth took place in the year 1694.





## CHAPTER V

Political Position of France—Illness of the Dauphin—Les Dames de la Halle—A New Campaign—Affront to the Duke of Chartres—His Increased Libertinage—Regal Retorts—Quarrel of the King and Monsieur—Indisposition of Monsieur ; His Death—Terror of Madame—Interview Between Louis XIV. and the Duke of Chartres—Want of Feeling of the King—Grief of the Duchess of Bourgogne—The Breton Table—Novel Position of the Duke of Chartres—Late Court of Monsieur—Madame, and Madame de Maintenon.

THE accession of the Duke of Anjou to the throne of Spain had, meanwhile, destroyed the equilibrium of Europe, and William III., then recently dead, but even beyond the grave the most resolute enemy of Louis XIV., had bequeathed to him the new league which bore the name of the Great Alliance, and which had for its aim to place the Spanish crown upon the head of the Archduke Charles, the son of the Emperor of Germany ; or, in default of disposing Philip V. of his kingdom, to trace round the two nations of France and Spain a limit which should never be overpassed by the ambition of either.

Menaced on all sides, Louis XIV. accordingly found himself once more compelled to sustain a war against the European powers, and preparations for hostilities had already commenced when Versailles was again convulsed by new terrors.

On the night of the 19th of March, 1701, the King, while at prayers at Marly, previously to retiring to rest, was startled by hearing a confusion in his cabinet, accompanied by inquiries for his physician and surgeon. The Dauphin had suddenly been attacked by severe indisposition. He had passed the day at Meudon, where he had partaken only of a slight luncheon, but at the Royal supper had eaten immensely of fish, and immediately retired to his apartment, after having taken leave of the King in his closet. He had, however, scarcely terminated his prayer, and seated himself in an armchair, in order that his valets might undress him, when he fainted; and his attendants, and such of the courtiers as were in his apartments, had hastened in their terror to those of the King to summon assistance. Louis XIV., half disrobed as he was, lost not a moment in hastening by a dark, narrow, and inconvenient staircase to the chamber of his son, whither he was accompanied by the Duchess of Bourgogne, who had also been alarmed by the outcry. They found MONSEIGNEUR in a state of extreme suffering, contending against Felix, who persisted in bleeding him, in which attempt he at length fortunately succeeded; and efficient remedies being subsequently applied, the Royal invalid was in a few hours declared convalescent, although the attack proved sufficiently violent to confine him during several days to his bed.

The Dauphin was very popular in Paris, where he frequently appeared at the opera, and also conciliated the populace by the affability of his deportment: and on this occasion the *Dames de la Halle*,\* being

\* Market women of Paris.



anxious to testify their attachment to his person, deputed four of their principal members to proceed to the palace, to inquire in person into the progress of his Royal Highness's convalescence. When they arrived the Dauphin ordered them to be admitted to his chamber, upon which the most enthusiastic of the deputation rushed to his bedside, threw their arms about his neck, and kissed him on both his cheeks; while the others, more moderate in their demonstrations, contented themselves by kissing his hand. They were warmly welcomed, conducted over the palace, and ultimately entertained to dinner; while MONSEIGNEUR presented them, on their departure, with a sum of money, to which another was added by the King; and they were so much gratified with the honours which had been lavished upon them, that they commanded a *Te Deum* at St. Eustache, and afterwards gave a grand entertainment in commemoration of the event.

Meanwhile the organisation of the troops had been completed, and the command of those destined for Flanders given to the Marshal of Boufflers, while those against Germany were to serve under the Marshal of Villeroy. The Duke of Bourgogne had been originally named to the command of the latter, but the appointment was subsequently cancelled, in consequence of the undisguised annoyance of *Monsieur* that the offer of his son to serve in this campaign had been rejected.

The King had, indeed, consented to the suggestion merely in the hope of what actually ensued, feeling convinced that *Monsieur*, piqued that no command had

been given to the Duke of Chartres, would not accede to such an arrangement, and, therefore, made it dependent upon his approval; but both *Monsieur* and the Duke of Chartres at once felt that if they consented to accept a less distinguished position in this campaign, it would not be possible to refuse the latter, at his age, the command of an army in the following year, and they consequently decided that they would overlook the slight. Louis XIV., who, for this very reason, had been averse to accepting the services of his nephew, was accordingly both astonished and embarrassed when he found that *Monsieur*, as well as his son, agreed to such a sacrifice; but his will proved stronger than his vexation, and once more he positively refused to permit the Duke of Chartres to join the army. He did not, however, by these means escape the mortifications from which he shrank; for the young Duke, at once indignant and exasperated at a pertinacity which destroyed all his hopes of military renown, abandoned himself to an open career of libertinage, which angered and perplexed the Monarch in a greater degree than ever.

The position was one of considerable embarrassment, even to Louis XIV., who was at some loss how to act towards a nephew whom he had compelled to become his son-in-law; and towards whom, save in the writings of the bond, he had falsified every promise; while, as regarded *Monsieur*, this new affront aroused the old grievance of the government of Brittany, which was one of the pledges of the marriage contract, and which had never been redeemed, while *Madame*, justly incensed that her son had not even

reaped the pecuniary advantages consequent upon what she persisted in designating as his disgraceful alliance, visited upon *Monsieur* all the violence of her indignation—a demonstration rendered the less necessary by the fact that the Prince himself had already bitterly regretted his weakness.

Thus were things situated when it was reported to the Monarch that the Duke of Chartres had become the father of a son,\* whose mother was Mademoiselle Séry de la Boissière, one of the maids of honour of *Madame*; and his anger was so great, that he took an opportunity of reproaching *Monsieur* with a want of authority over his own child, which was, as he declared, entailing disgrace upon all the Royal Family of France.

The temper of the Prince, already soured by his disappointment, placid as it generally was, gave way before this attack, and he demanded, with a haughty asperity which startled the King, what he could expect from a young man of that age, who was weary of pacing the galleries of Versailles and of wearing away the pavement of its Courts, of being married against his will, and of remaining unprovided for, while he saw his brothers-in-law inundated with governments, establishments, and honours, without reason, policy or precedent; alleging, moreover, that his son was placed in a worse position than the more youthful nobility of France, who were allowed to join the army, and upon whom military rank was conferred ungrudgingly.

Louis XIV., anxious to terminate this unexpected

\* Known as the Chevalier d'Orleans, and subsequently Grand-Prior of France.

ebullition, endeavoured to turn the conversation once more upon the extreme libertinage of the Duke ; but *Monsieur* had now passed the Rubicon, and, for the first time in his life, was not to be awed into silence and submission by the frown of his august brother. He consequently retorted that idleness was the mother of all vice, and that no one could see with more regret than himself, the increasing imprudence and recklessness of the Duke of Chartres ; but that he nevertheless witnessed them without surprise, and could not be guilty of the cruelty of reproaching him with faults and follies into which he had been precipitated by the mortifications entailed upon him by the King himself.

Conscious that he could advance no argument sufficiently feasible to controvert this assertion, and wearied by a conflict in which he felt aware that he was by far the weaker party, Louis XIV. was sufficiently master of himself to reply only by a fraternal smile ; and embracing *Monsieur*, who lent himself very unwillingly to this sudden burst of tenderness, he assured him that he felt no displeasure at the heat with which he had expressed himself, as he was convinced that he had forgotten the Prince in the parent, and that their interview should have no effect upon his affection.

Thenceforward, however, although the Duke scrupulously observed all necessary etiquette, and even behaved towards the King in public as though no coolness existed between them, all the blandishments of his Royal brother could not efface his resentment ; but nevertheless, perceiving that no consideration for his

feelings would induce the Monarch to forego his determination, and to allow the Duke of Chartres to serve in the approaching campaign, he was at length prevailed upon by his favourites to abate somewhat of his hostility, and to endeavour to compel his son to pursue his pleasures less openly.

Despite this precaution, however, when some days subsequently *Monsieur* proceeded from St. Cloud to Marly, in order to dine with the Monarch, and entered his cabinet according to his habit at the close of his council, Louis XIV. once more reverted to the dissolute habits of the young Prince, and became so harsh in his accusations, that the Duke, unable to endure further annoyance upon the subject, replied, bitterly, that fathers whose lives had not been without reproach could possess little authority over the morals of their children. The blow told, and the King made an evasive answer, merely expatiating upon the patience of his daughter, and the necessity there existed of at least concealing from her eyes the results of her husband's folly; upon which a sarcastic smile passed over the features of the Duke, as he remarked that his Majesty appeared to have forgotten the period when he had compelled the Queen, his wife, not only to associate with his mistresses, but even to be seen publicly with them in her carriage.

Driven beyond his patience by this direct attack, Louis XIV. burst into a fury of rage, which was met with equal violence by *Monsieur*, and the altercation became so vehement, that all the courtiers who were awaiting the appearance of the King, when he should pass to the dining-hall, in an adjoining saloon, sepa-

rated from the Royal cabinet merely by a screen of tapestry, were innocently rendered auditors of the whole of this stormy dialogue, which was only terminated by the appearance of an usher upon the threshold, to announce that his Majesty's dinner was served; upon which the King immediately left the cabinet, remarking to *Monsieur* that the forthcoming war would oblige him to make retrenchments, which he should commence on the property of those who had shown themselves careless of his pleasure.

He had scarcely entered the saloon when he was followed by *Monsieur*, who was in so great a state of excitement that it was generally remarked, should he neglect the precaution of losing blood, he would, inevitably, expose himself to severe illness. At table the Duke ate immensely, as was his usual habit, although he was evidently suffering, as was evinced by the extreme dilation of his eyes and the heightened colour of his complexion. He however completed his repast without authorising any remark or offer of assistance; and, on rising from table, accompanied the Duchess of Chartres to St. Germain, where she paid a visit to the Queen of England, and afterwards returned with her to St. Cloud.

In the evening, *Monsieur*, still without uttering a complaint, joined the supper party, and again ate largely; but during the meal, as he was pouring out a glass of liquor for the Duchess of Bouillon, it was remarked that he stammered, and made a gesture with his hand. As he was occasionally in the habit of expressing himself in Spanish, it was at first believed that he had done so on this occasion, and one of the

guests requested him to repeat the phrase ; but as the words escaped the speaker, the decanter dropped from the hand of the Prince, and he fell into the arms of the Duke of Chartres, who was seated near him. The consternation was universal, for it was at once perceived that he had been stricken with apoplexy, and he was hastily conveyed to his chamber, where he was bled at intervals, and every means vainly employed to restore him to consciousness.

A courier was immediately despatched to Marly with the melancholy tidings ; but the King, who habitually hastened to the bedside of his brother, however slight might be the indisposition from which he was suffering, contented himself, on this occasion, by commanding that his equipages might be in readiness should they be required, and by sending the Marquis de Gesvres to St. Cloud to ascertain the real condition of the sufferer ; after which he proceeded to the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, where he remained for a quarter of an hour, and then retired to bed, persuading himself that this sudden assumption of illness was a subterfuge on the part of *Monsieur* to induce a reconciliation, for which his own visit might serve as the pretext.

Only an hour and a half had, however, elapsed, when a messenger arrived from the Duke of Chartres, with the intelligence that every remedy had proved unavailing, and that *Monsieur* was rapidly sinking. Upon this announcement the King left his bed, and as the carriages were still in waiting, departed without further delay for St. Cloud. The courtiers, who had followed the example of the Monarch, and already re-



tired to their beds, immediately rose in their turn, summoned their attendants, and in twenty minutes all the inmates of Marly were on the road to the palace of the dying Prince; while the Dauphin, who was accompanied by the Duchess of Bourgogne, was so overcome by the recollection of his recent escape, and the anticipation of the scene of which he was about to become a witness, that it was with great difficulty he was supported to his carriage by an equerry.

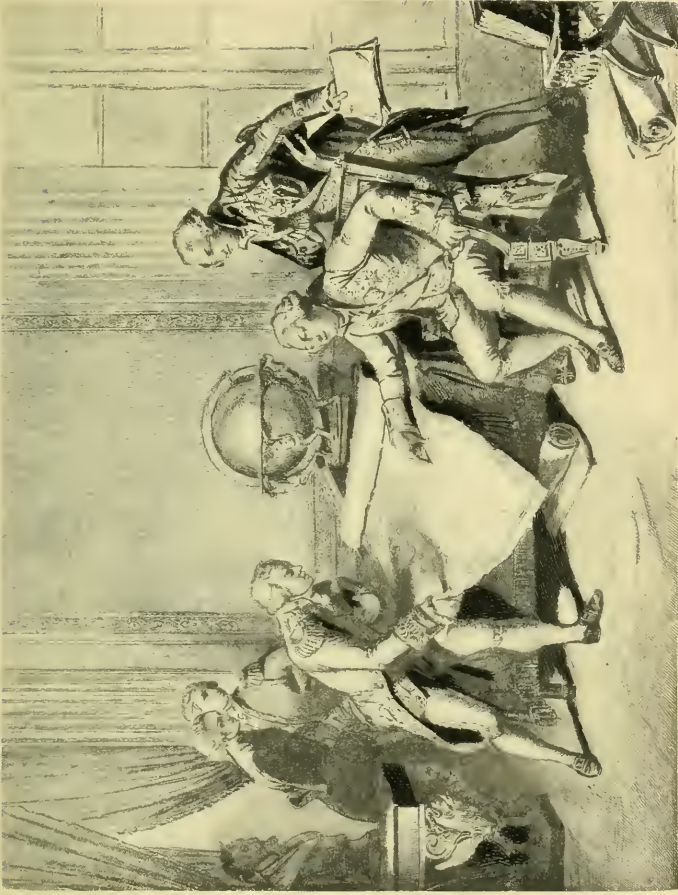
At three o'clock in the morning the King arrived at St. Cloud; but it was already too late. Not a symptom of consciousness had been detected in the sufferer since the first moment of the attack. The emotion of the Monarch was violent, and he had not been many instants in the chamber ere he was drowned in tears. Until within the last two months no cloud had ever passed between himself and the affectionate and submissive brother, who had been the playmate of his infancy, and the friend of his manhood. The scene of the morning was also fresh in his memory, and its fearful results were now before him. *Monsieur* was, moreover, his junior by two years, and had, throughout his life, enjoyed health more robust than his own; and it is therefore probable that all the tears shed by Louis XIV. in that crowded sick-room did not fall for his dying brother.

The King attended mass at St. Cloud, and at eight o'clock, the condition of *Monsieur* rendering all amendment hopeless, the Duchess of Bourgoyne and Madame de Maintenon suggested his return to Marly, whither they accompanied him in his carriage. As he was about to retire, and was condoling with M. de



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Chartres, the young Duke exclaimed, mournfully, "Ah! Sire, what will now become of me? I am about to lose *Monsieur*, and I am aware that you do not love me."

The King, surprised and affected by this heartfelt appeal, embraced him tenderly, assured him that he might rely upon his affection, and then departed from the house of death.

When the Monarch reached Marly he proceeded to the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, still accompanied by the Duchess of Bourgogne; and three hours afterwards, his physician, whom he had commanded to remain beside *Monsieur* so long as he should continue to breathe, appeared upon the threshold of the chamber.

"My brother is, then, dead!" exclaimed the King, as he recognised the intruder.

"He is, Sire," was the reply; "no remedies would produce any effect."

As Louis XIV. was thus made aware that all was indeed over, he buried his face in his hands, and for a time again wept bitterly; but when he was urged by the Duchess to take some refreshment in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, and to spare himself the tedium and restraint of a public dinner, he resolutely refused to be guilty of so serious an infraction of etiquette, and declared his determination to dine as usual with the ladies of the Court. To this resolution he adhered; but the repast was not prolonged, and at its termination he gave audience to the Ministers and the master of the ceremonies, with whom he arranged all the detail of the Royal funeral; received a visit of

condolence from the Queen of England; and, finally, made a tour of the gardens before he retired to rest.

The King had no sooner passed the gates of St. Cloud than the crowd which had thronged the apartments gradually dispersed, until at length the body of *Monsieur* was surrounded only by the menial servants of his household; who, some from affection and others from interest, were his most sincere mourners. *Madame* was in her own apartment; but, as we have already stated, never having felt either affection or esteem for her dying husband, she was weeping over herself and her own prospects, and exclaiming, at intervals, "Not a convent! They must not speak to me of a convent! I will not be sent to a convent!" And it was no sooner ascertained that *Monsieur* had at length expired than she got into her carriage, accompanied by the Duke and Duchess of Chartres, and followed by all their attendants, and proceeded to Versailles.

On the following morning M. de Chartres was admitted to the bedside of the King, who had not yet risen, and who received him with great tenderness, desiring him thenceforth to look upon him as a father, who would be careful of his interests, and forget all the subjects of annoyance which had arisen between them, which he trusted that he would also cease to remember, and replace by a mutual affection.

The young Duke answered this address only with his tears and stifled ejaculations of gratitude.

After a scene of so much terror and affliction, and the emotion which Louis XIV. had evinced at the loss of his only brother, it was anticipated that the period which still remained to pass at Marly would be one of



gloom and melancholy; but, to the astonishment of the ladies of the palace, who at midday entered the anteroom of Madame de Maintenon, which adjoined her apartment, and where the King and the Duchess of Bourgogne had borne her company for the last hour, they were greeted by the sound of his voice, singing an air from one of the new operas; and a few moments afterwards they were summoned to enter and assist in amusing the Duchess, who was, as the Monarch expressed it, overcome by some *unaccountable* fit of low spirits.

In fact, the poor young Duchess, lost in terror at the remembrance of the first deathbed that she had ever witnessed, could not shake off the impression which it had made upon her mind, and was unable to exert herself, as she was accustomed to do, for the entertainment of the King, who, having himself recovered from the fatal event of the preceding evening, was unable to understand that the sensibilities of another might be less flexible than his own. Nor was this all; for, on leaving the dinner-table at two o'clock, about six-and-twenty hours after the death of *Monsieur*, the Duke of Bourgogne challenged the Duke of Montfort to a party at *brelan*—a game of chance then greatly in vogue at the French Court. The astonishment of the courtier was excessive, and he ventured to reply by the remark that his Royal Highness must for a moment have forgotten that the remains of *Monsieur* were not yet cold.

"Pardon me," answered the Prince, "I am well aware of it; but the King will not consent to see any one dull at Marly, and has commanded me to form

the tables, with an express order that I am to set the example."

All further objection was, of course, impossible. The *brelan* party was formed, and the saloons soon became a scene of universal play.

Such was the mourning of Louis XIV.; while, as regarded Madame de Maintenon, who had always disliked the deceased Duke, and apprehended that he might eventually exercise an influence over the mind of the Monarch, which could not fail to prejudice her own interests, she had so much difficulty in concealing her satisfaction at his demise, that she was delighted when the egotism of the King afforded her a legitimate opportunity of throwing off all outward semblance of sorrow, and of recurring to her usual mode of life.

The Dauphin, who had amused himself by the antics of a learned pony while his own mother was on her way to the grave, could not reasonably be expected to feel deeply for his uncle, although that uncle had perpetually entertained him with balls and ballets, and all the pleasures to which he was the most partial; and accordingly, on the day succeeding his death, having spent his morning in wolf-hunting, and on his arrival at Marly found the gaming-tables in full operation, he conformed to the fashion of the hour, and wound up the evening with cards. The Dukes of Bourgogne and Berri, as they seldom saw *Monsieur*, save on state occasions, felt his death only as that of a relation of whom they knew little, and did not profess a grief which they were not called upon to experience; but such was far from being the case with the young Duchess, whose sorrow was sincere, as from the

period of her marriage *Monsieur* had treated her with the utmost tenderness and indulgence; but she was compelled to reserve her tears for the solitude of her chamber, prohibited as they were in the circle of the King.

The deepest mourner was, however, the Duke of Chartres. *Monsieur* had been to him a kind, a fond, and a forgiving father, from whom he had never experienced either severity or restraint, while he had also protected him from the displeasure of the Monarch, to which he was now exposed. The latter source of regret was, however, silenced for a time by the magnificence with which the King fulfilled to the young Prince the pledge that he had given over the dead body of his brother; for, in addition to the personal pensions that he had previously possessed, Louis XIV. secured to him those also which had been enjoyed by *Monsieur*—a liberality by which, when the dower and other claims of *Madame* were paid, the Duke of Chartres found himself in possession of eighteen hundred thousand annual livres, including his appanage, besides the Palais-Royal, St. Cloud, and his other residences. He was, moreover, allowed Swiss and body-guards—an arrangement hitherto without precedent, no Princes of the Blood having previously been so attended, save the sons and grandsons of Sovereigns—his own guard-room in the interior of the palace of Versailles; a Chancellor and an Attorney-General, in whose joint names he could plead without appearing by his own; and the right of nomination to all the offices of his appanage, with the exception of the bishoprics. He, moreover, assumed the title of Duke of Orleans; and

retained, not only the regiments, both of cavalry and infantry, which had belonged to *Monsieur*, but also his own troops of gendarmes and light-horsemen.

The King wore mourning for six months, and defrayed all the expenses of the funeral, which took place with great magnificence.

By the death of *Monsieur* the Court lost much of its attraction; for he alone had, for the last few years, relieved its monotony by a succession of splendid amusements, which had afforded a reflection of past times; and, despite his prejudice in favour of high rank and noble blood, his affability and courtesy had insured him universal popularity. As a host he was unequalled, sacrificing both his time and his convenience to the gratification of those around him, while nothing afforded him so much pleasure as to see his Court numerous and brilliantly attended. At St. Cloud, where all his household were accustomed to assemble, many ladies were admitted who were not to be met with elsewhere; but they were all of high rank, and addicted to high play. The pleasures provided within the palace, and the extreme beauty of its situation—where carriages almost innumerable were provided for the accommodation of those who were too indolent to walk—the delicious concerts, and the splendid fare, rendered it an abode of luxury and comfort, without, however, detracting from its magnificence and grandeur; for the innate dignity of the Prince commanded respect, even in his moments of familiarity.

*Madame*, meanwhile, had rather endured than assisted in these regal hospitalities; for, although she dined and supped with the Court, and even occasion-

ally drove out with some of her ladies, she frequently became sullen, and occasionally discourteous, uttering sarcasms which were the terror of the whole circle; and it was consequently a relief when she retired to her cabinet, in which she passed the remainder of her time gazing upon the family portraits with which she had lined the walls, and writing whole volumes of letters to her absent relatives, of which she afterwards made copies with her own hand.

On the 11th of June the Court returned to Versailles, where the King had no sooner arrived than he visited *Madame* and the Duke and Duchess of Chartres in their private apartments.

The widowed Princess, when apprised of this gracious intention, became, however, so much alarmed at the prospect of receiving him, that she requested the Duchess of Ventadour to see Madame de Maintenon, and to inquire what was the probable motive of his Majesty in according to her so great a favour, when she had reason to be aware that he believed himself aggrieved by her conduct. The answer was by no means calculated to allay her fears; for it was reserved even to caution; and the Duchess returned only with the information that Madame de Maintenon would pay a visit to *Madame* when the King had dined, and that she had, moreover, expressed her wish that the Duchess herself should be present at the interview.

At the appointed time, accordingly, Madame de Maintenon was announced, when *Madame*, having caused all her ladies to retire save Madame de Ventadour, desired that a chair might be placed for her visitor—an attention which sufficed at once to con-

vince the favourite that the Princess was conscious of her dependence on her good offices.

This courtesy was no sooner offered and accepted than *Madame* opened the conversation by complaining of the indifference evinced by the Monarch during a temporary indisposition from which she had suffered since the death of her husband; and Madame de Maintenon permitted her to expatiate upon her disappointment and mortification until the subject was exhausted, when she informed her that she was authorised by his Majesty to assure her Royal Highness that their common loss had effaced all that was past from his memory, provided her future deportment were more consonant to his wishes, not only as regarded himself, and all that had taken place on the subject of the Duke of Chartres, but also on other points, which had in reality induced the neglect of which she complained.

*Madame*, who, save as regarded her son, and her want of respect for Court etiquette, believed herself safe, vehemently insisted that she had not, upon any other point, afforded the least pretext for a displeasure which had been so heavily and so conspicuously visited upon her, and became even indignant in her own justification; whereupon Madame de Maintenon drew a letter from her pocket, and inquired if she recognised the handwriting.

As the Princess received it, she with difficulty retained her self-possession, for she instantly recognised it as one that she had addressed to her aunt, the Duchess of Hanover, to whom she was in the constant habit of writing by every post, and in which, after having detailed the current news of the Court, she had

declared that she could no longer determine whether Madame de Maintenon were the wife of the King or only his mistress, and thence digressed to the state of the kingdom, both within and without, giving it as her decided opinion that it was at that moment reduced to a state of depression from which it could never hope to resuscitate. This unhappy and ill-judged epistle had been opened by the authorities of the post-office, as was common at the time ; but, instead of furnishing an extract for the information of the Monarch, and then being suffered to proceed to its destination, it had been detained, and submitted to his perusal in its original shape.

*Madame* had, accordingly, no sooner affected to read its contents, in order to obtain time to recover a portion of her composure, than she burst into tears ; upon which Madame de Maintenon, in her most measured tones, passed the letter in review, expatiating upon the enormity of its several and separate contents, and the effect which they were calculated to produce in a foreign country. In vain did the unhappy Princess assert that her words were merely the echo of what passed around her, and that she had written jestingly, and without an idea of malice : the cold and impassible countenance of her auditor convinced her that she would depart with no such reply, and she was finally condemned to descend to apologies, to supplications, and to promises.

When a perfect understanding was established on the subject of the letter, Madame de Maintenon, who still pertinaciously retained her seat, informed the Princess that she should esteem it a favour if, now that



she had executed the commission with which she had been entrusted by the King, she would permit her, before she took her leave, to trouble her upon a subject in which she was herself more particularly interested, and to inquire why, after the honour which her Royal Highness had originally done her, of accepting her friendship, and even of volunteering her own in return, she had withdrawn entirely from her circle?

As this inquiry was made, *Madame* recovered her presence of mind, and hastened to reply that she congratulated herself upon the opportunity which it afforded to her of retorting upon Madame de Maintenon herself the accusation of a change as causeless as it was uncourteous; for that while she had for a time exerted herself to maintain an intimacy, which she would gladly have continued to the end of her life, she had been met only with coldness, neglect, and even an absence of that respect which was due to her rank.

This was the very admission which Madame de Maintenon had been anxious to educe from the lips of the haughty Bavarian; and it was, therefore, no sooner made than she answered, coldly and proudly, that her Royal Highness did her no more than justice; for that she was aware it had only depended upon herself to continue the intimacy which had once existed between them; but that circumstances which had come to her knowledge had rendered all further professions of friendship towards her Royal Highness inconsistent with her own sense of dignity and self-respect, and she had, in consequence, considered it necessary to withdraw from all such demonstrations.

The Princess impatiently demanded her reasons, affirming that she had a right to learn of what she was accused, and who were her accusers ; nor was she destined long to remain in ignorance of either. Madame de Maintenon had listened unmoved to her disclaimers, and the defiance which she boldly threw out, declaring that no one would dare to assert that she had injured the Marchioness in any way ; and when they were at length brought to a close, she replied, with one of those cold and ambiguous smiles which were rapidly becoming the terror of Louis XIV., that she should not hesitate to satisfy the Duchess upon both these points, although she had for ten years confined the secret to her own bosom ; but that, as the Dauphiness had now been in her grave for that period, she considered herself at liberty to inform her Royal Highness that during the last hours of that lamented Princess, who had done her the honour before her death to recognise the affectionate attachment which she bore to her person, and to accept her services during her final illness, she had learned from her own lips the unsparing manner in which *Madame* had sported alike with her happiness and with her reputation. And then, in order to enforce upon the bewildered Princess the extent of her information, she repeated, with a steady voice and blanched lips, a multitude of sarcasms and accusations, each in itself a deadly affront, with which Charlotte Elisabeth of Bavaria was only too well acquainted.

This second blow was too much even for the haughty spirit of *Madame*, who saw all her future hopes of peace and consideration dependent on the mercy

of a woman whom she both hated and despised, but to whom she found herself compelled to sue for pardon. She had consequently no alternative save to weep more bitterly than before—to exclaim against the treachery of the Dauphiness, who had repeated conversations idly and thoughtlessly carried on, and understood to be purely confidential, and to be forgotten as soon as uttered ; and then she took the hand of Madame de Maintenon, and pressed it between her own, which were humid with her tears.

After having for a time coldly triumphed in the abasement of her enemy, the visitor at length suffered herself to be appeased, as she had previously determined to do, and even consoled the terrified Princess by promising, in the King's name, that the reconciliation which had now taken place should involve his own, and that he would never on any occasion mention either of the subjects under discussion to *Madame*, but entirely dismiss them from his memory—an assurance which, more than any other, tended in some degree to console the Princess for the degradation to which she had been subjected.\*

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.





## CHAPTER VI

Marriage of Philip V.—The Young Sovereigns—The Princess of Ursins—The Cardinal d'Estrées—Court Flatteries—Death of the Iron Mask—Progress of the Persecutions in the Cevennes—The Marshal of Villars—John Cavalier—Meeting of Louis XIV. and the Calvinist Leader—Flight of Cavalier from France—Decline of the Military Glory of the French Armies—Accusation Against the Duchess of Bourgogne ; Her Position at Court ; Her Errors—Death of Madame de Montespan ; Her Last Hope ; Occupation of Her Closing Years ; Fate of Her Remains.

ON the 11th of September of the same year an alliance was formed between the young King of Spain and Maria Louisa of Savoy, the sister of the Duchess of Bourgogne. This Princess, although short in stature, was beautifully formed, with a fine complexion, and eyes of singular brilliancy. Full of talent and good sense, graceful, amiable, but withal possessed of considerable pride, she bore about her all the evidence of high birth and innate dignity, and eventually distinguished herself by a courage and firmness which were remarkable in her sex and at her early age ; while they were, moreover, eminently advantageous to her husband, who, although by no means deficient either in sound judgment or powers of mind, was nevertheless the victim of an extreme indolence, augmented

by the perpetual restraint to which he was subjected and encouraged by the cold and reserved nature of his character.

The young Sovereigns, alike strangers to each other and to the country which they were called upon to govern, were placed in a position of so much peril and difficulty, that Louis XIV. considered it expedient to provide them with a prudent and intelligent friend, who might serve at once as their companion and adviser; and his selection ultimately fell upon the Princess of Ursins,\* who, having passed a great portion of her life at foreign Courts, was familiar with the habits of that of Spain, and was, moreover, a woman of powerful talent and high breeding. Possessed of these advantages, which were no sooner made known to him by Madame de Maintenon than he fully appreciated their value, this Princess had appeared to the Monarch the most eligible person upon whom he could confer so important a charge as that of initiating a Queen, yet in her girlhood, into the difficult art of maintaining her Court with befitting dignity, while, although Madame des Ursins could not be considered by the Spaniards as a stranger, he still hoped that she would be sufficiently estranged from them as a nation not to involve herself in the intrigues and cabals of the Court of Madrid.

During the widowhood of Madame Scarron, the Princess had expressed considerable sympathy with her misfortunes and interest in her fate, although she

\* Anna Maria de la Trémouille de Noirmoutier was the widow of Talleyrand, Prince de Chalais, and wife of the Duke of Bracciano, a Grandee of Spain, and representative of the Ursins family.

had never carried either so far as to prove an active friend; but she had no sooner ascertained that the Spanish appointment was to take place than, profiting by their former acquaintance, she had immediate recourse to the influence of Madame de Maintenon, who had, as she did not scruple then to express herself, "the goodness to speak of her to the King;" and it was doubtlessly through that very influence that this haughty, rich, and independent woman obtained, with the title of *Camerera Major*, the right to receive the dressing-gown of the King of Spain from his own hands when he was about to get into bed, to present both his dressing-gown and slippers when he was preparing to rise, the pleasure of snatching her repasts whenever she could find a moment in which to do so, of rising at a particular hour, however greatly she might need rest, of fulfilling the most menial offices about the young Queen, and, finally, as she herself boasted, of emulating half a dozen hired attendants. "I feel sure," she wrote to her sister-in-law, "that the Piedmontese waiting-women of the Queen will not wash her feet or draw off her shoes and stockings so expeditiously as I have done."

But the Princess was resolved, at whatever cost of comfort or condescension, to acquire the confidence and regard of the Royal pair—an attempt in which she perfectly succeeded.

Madame des Ursins was associated in her office of friend and Counsellor with the Cardinal d'Estrées,\*

\* Cæsar d'Estrées, Cardinal Abbé of St. Germain-des-Prés, was born in 1628, and was the son of Francis Annibal d'Estrées, Duke, peer, and Marshal of France. He was raised to the Bishopric of Laon in

who was instructed to maintain a perfect intelligence between the cabinets of Versailles and Madrid, and to reconcile their common interests. For this purpose Louis XIV. commanded his recall from Vienna, where he was at the moment on a diplomatic mission, believing him to be, as he declared, "the most able man in his dominions;" but the French King had forgotten that they were cotemporaries, and that the Cardinal, like himself, was beginning, both physically and morally, to experience the united effects of unceasing labour and increasing years; and this want of memory was the more excusable as the high breeding, the ready wit, and even the person of the courtly Cardinal, were still the wonder of all who remembered how long they had been exposed to the cares of office and the vicissitudes of climate.\*

As a proof of this fact, St. Simon relates of him that he had to the last preserved his teeth, which were extremely fine, almost in their original integrity—a circumstance the more fortunate as, from his having an unusually large mouth, they were more than commonly conspicuous; and that on one occasion when he was dining with Louis XIV., who was much attached to him, and always unbent in his society, upon

1653. The King selected him as mediator between the Pope's nuncio and the partisans of the Bishops of Aleth, Beauvais, Pamiers, and Angers, in which office he secured a reconciliation, which, for a time, restored peace to the French Church. Admitted to the conclave in 1674, he was sent to Bavaria in 1680 to arrange the marriage treaty of the Dauphin, and, after upholding at Rome the interests of France, he was ultimately appointed to follow Philip V. to Madrid to assist him in his ministry. He returned to France in 1703, and died in 1714.

\* *Mémoires Politique et Militaires*, par Adrian Maurice, Duc de Noailles.



the Monarch complaining of the inconvenience to which he was subjected by his want of teeth, "Oh! sire," replied his Eminence, with one of his broadest smiles, "who on earth has teeth in the present day?"

It would appear, however, that the Cardinals drew on flattery as smoothly as their scarlet stockings, and were not always scrupulous as to its quality or extent; for the same writer relates an anecdote of another Eminence, to whom Louis XIV. was, as a mark of especial favour, doing the honours of the gardens at Marly, when at a considerable distance from the palace they were overtaken by a slight shower, which induced the Monarch to express his regret that his guest should be exposed to the rain in so light a dress. "Sire," was the courtly but vapid reply of the Cardinal de Polignac, "the rain of Marly cannot wet any one."

On the 19th of November, 1703, the curate of the Church of St. Paul in Paris inscribed upon his register this brief record of a decease within his jurisdiction:

"This 19th of November, 1703, Marchialy, aged about forty-five years, died in the Bastille, and his body was interred in the cemetery of St. Paul, his parish, on the 20th of the said month, in the presence of M. Rosarges, Major, and M. Reilhe, Surgeon-Major of the Bastille, whose signatures follow."

And this was all—though a long, a fearful, and a mysterious history might have been appended to the registry; for this Marchialy, who died a prisoner, and was put into an obscure grave, unwept and unnoticed, was, as it is asserted, no other than the enigma which

all Europe has as yet endeavoured in vain to solve—the Man with the Iron Mask.

Meanwhile, the war to which we have already alluded, and which was destined to secure to that Prince Eugène, whose pretensions had been the jest of Louis XIV. and his generals, an undying reputation, was convulsing all the European nations; but as it affords a prominent page in the world's history, we shall not pause to record its vicissitudes, but rather turn our attention to that intestine struggle which was still deluging the fairest provinces of France with misery and blood.

After the assassination of the Abbé de Chayla, the Calvinists, conscious that the reprisals of their enemies would be deadly, retired to the rocks and forests, where their numbers rapidly increased; and from these wild fastnesses they made occasional sallies into the adjacent country, carrying ruin in their path. A great proportion of the peasantry secretly favoured their cause, for their war-cry was “No taxes, and liberty of conscience,” and the appeal came home to the heart of every man, while their hopes of ultimate success were sustained by the occasional aid which they received from both Holland, Savoy, and Geneva; the two former supplying them, whenever they were enabled to do so secretly, with arms, men, and money, and the latter with preachers or prophets of both sexes, by whose assumed inspirations they were guided in all their enterprises.

The suppression of this revolt (for such was the name that it originally bore) had been intrusted to the Marquis de Bâville, the intendant of Languedoc, who

had only succeeded by his bigotry and oppression in swelling the revolt into a rebellion ; while the second General who was sent against them was the Marshal of Montrevel, who carried on the conflict rather like an executioner than a soldier. Under his auspices the wheel and the fagot did the work of the sword and the pike ; and the excesses committed by his dragoons were so unparalleled, that the contest assumed the name of the *Dragonade* ; while the rebels on their side, driven to exasperation, repaid every cruelty in kind.

The King, embarrassed by a foreign war, could not send against them a sufficient body of troops to overpower or disperse their numbers, and it was difficult to take them by surprise, distributed as they were among almost inaccessible rocks which they had been the first to climb, in caverns hitherto inhabited only by the wild denizens of the forest, and in the depths of tangled woods where no pathway could be distinguished, but from whence they emerged at intervals, armed to the teeth, and uttering yells of defiance. They had little, moreover, to apprehend from the treachery of the natives of the province ; not only the peasantry affording them help and shelter, but the owners of many of the châteaux readily granting them refuge when they were pursued, and supplying them with food, with which they returned laden to their hiding-places ; while even the city of Nismes and other minor towns were detected in making sundry efforts to uphold their cause.

Once they met their enemies *en masse*, when the Royal troops were so signally defeated that the result, happily for both Christendom and humanity, was the

recall of M. de Montrevel, and the substitution of the Marshal of Villars.\*

As the new General soon ascertained that it was as difficult to track the rebels as to vanquish them, he had no sooner made himself feared, than he proposed an amnesty, to which some among their leaders, weary of a life of perpetual hardship and bloodshed, at length consented.

Of these, the most remarkable was John Cavalier, who had been one of the principal Chiefs of the Cévenols, and who consented, not only to lay down his own arms, but also to induce his followers to do the same, on condition that the Marshal would guarantee to him the title of Colonel, and the command of a regiment which he undertook to raise. To these terms M. de Villars readily consented, for at the period when the proposition was made, Cavalier was at the head of

\* Louis Hector, Marquis and subsequently Duke of Villars, was born in 1653, entered the army at an early age, and soon distinguished himself by his intrepidity. Appointed Adjutant-General in 1690, he gained the victory of Friedlingen, where he was opposed to the Prince of Baden, in 1702, and the following year that of Höchstet. Appointed Marshal of France, he was entrusted with the pacification of Languedoc, and succeeded in his mission. Recalled to Germany, he arrested the progress of Marlborough, and beat the enemy at Stollhoffen (1707), after which he passed into Dauphiny, where he defeated the plans of Prince Eugène. In 1709 he returned to Flanders, where he fought the unfortunate battle of Malplaquet, in which he was both worsted and wounded; but he revenged his defeat by the victory of Denian, which, while it insured the safety of the nation, also induced the treaty of peace in 1714, at Rastadt. Appointed president of the council of war, and admitted to the council of the regency after the death of Louis XIV., he became at one and the same time Duke and Peer, Governor of Provence, a Grandee of Spain, and a member of the French Academy. On the recurrence of the war in 1733, he took the command in Italy, with the title of General of the Camps and Armies of the King. He returned to France, and died in 1734, leaving behind him the *Memoirs* which bear his name.

eight hundred men, and was the more formidable from the fact that he was especially protected by their most powerful prophetess, who had declared him to be appointed to the post which he then occupied by the direct influence of the Holy Spirit.

Barely three-and-twenty years of age, small in person, and with a physiognomy singularly gentle and attractive, Cavalier had rather the appearance of a priest than a soldier; but his extraordinary courage and intrepidity, the perseverance with which he overcame every difficulty, and the skill with which he conducted all his enterprises, rendered him the most dangerous enemy against whom the Royal forces were called upon to contend.

When his proposal had been received by the Marshal, and that Cavalier was summoned to present himself at Nismes, in order that the ratification of the amnesty might be finally arranged, his usual caution did not forsake him; for previously to placing himself in the power of the Royalist General, he demanded hostages, which were unhesitatingly granted, and ultimately insisted that he should be attended during the interview by the same number of armed men as formed the guard of M. de Villars himself; this condition also was conceded, and thus escorted, and accompanied by a brother chief named Roland, the Cévenol leader signed the terms of the capitulation, during which ceremony the natural dignity and perfect good breeding of Cavalier excited the astonishment of the Marshal, who had ascertained that, previously to the revolt, the quick-witted and courageous soldier before him, whose sole word had sufficed to control a numerous and un-

disciplined army, was merely an apprentice to a baker, obscure in birth as in station, and betraying no symptoms of the fiery and resolute spirit which he afterwards evinced.

As M. de Villars, upon the pacification of the Cévennes, was reappointed to the army in Flanders, he determined, on his return to Versailles, to present the new Colonel himself to the Ministers; and both he and his proselyte endeavoured to induce Roland, who had long been the friend and comrade of Cavalier, also to accept service under the King. The young chief, however, resolutely refused to abandon his party, declaring that he should never believe Cavalier himself to be sincere in his desertion until he saw him bend his steps towards Paris in company of the enemies of his province and of his faith; which he had no sooner done than he once more rallied the dispersed Calvinists—who, disheartened by the desertion of their most influential leader, had begun to disband themselves, and to attempt an escape across the frontier in separate bands—and renewed, although with less activity and success, the struggle which had been momentarily suspended.

As he proceeded towards the Capital, the young Cévenol chief was met by strong demonstrations of respect and affection; and at Mâcon, during a temporary halt, he received an order from the Controller-General to proceed at once to Versailles, where his welcome from the Minister was so marked and courteous, that, at the termination of the interview, he felt secure of the realisation of all his brightest visions for the future. Cavalier knew nothing of the Court, nor



of Court diplomacy : he was in a new world ; the wild child of the mountains was breathing the close and scented atmosphere of a ministerial apartment ; and when the great personage to whom he had been admitted informed him, with a bland smile, that he was at that moment the one topic of the courtly circle, promised him his own protection, and assured him that half the nobility, both male and female, were prepared to do the same, no wonder that the heart of the young and ardent soldier beat high with pride and gratified ambition. But the climax of his triumph was yet to come ; for before he left the cabinet of the Minister it was confided to him that the King himself desired to see him, and that he must in consequence be in readiness for his presentation on the day after the morrow, when he would have a place assigned to him on the great staircase, near which his Majesty must pass.

Cavalier attired himself magnificently ; his graceful figure, handsome face, and martial demeanour, had never before been so conspicuous ; and his whole appearance, when he took up the station appropriated to him with a calm and dignified but modest self-possession, which silenced even those who had already begun to make merry on the subject of his origin, and then shook back the redundant masses of long fair hair which fell in glossy curls about his brow and shoulders, as he swept the circle with a keen and rapid glance, excited universal comment and admiration ; but as no one was yet assured of the reception which awaited him from the King, and that none were anxious to compromise themselves by any premature demonstration, the young soldier was not greeted by



a single courtesy, and stood leaning against the gilded balustrade of the staircase, with his legs crossed negligently, and waving the light plume of his hat to and fro, in complete and somewhat disdainful silence.

Suddenly a loud murmur of voices was heard, and as Cavalier turned to ascertain its cause, he found himself in the presence of the King. He had never before seen Louis XIV., and the blood instinctively mounted to his brow as he assumed a more respectful attitude.

When he reached the landing upon which Cavalier was stationed, the King paused, affecting to direct the attention of one of his ministers to a new ceiling which Lebrun had just completed, but actually that he might be enabled to contemplate at his ease the singular young man who had contended for so long a time against two *Marshals of France*, and had finally made a treaty with a third; and when he had at length satisfied his curiosity, he inquired, as he indicated by a gesture that he spoke of the C  venol chief, the name of this young noble whom he now saw for the first time.

On being informed by the Minister, who made one step forward to present him, that it was Colonel John Cavalier, "Oh, true," was the contemptuous reply, "the baker's boy of Anduze;" and, with a disdainful shrug of the shoulders, the Monarch moved on. On his side Cavalier had advanced a pace, believing that Louis XIV. would address him, when this insulting rejoinder fell upon his ear, and for an instant he stood as though he had been petrified to stone; but in the next he convulsively grasped the hilt of his sword,

and, feeling that he was lost if he ventured to remain among the crowd who were watching his every motion, he sprang down the steps under the vestibule, rushed into the garden, which he traversed at a rapid pace, and returned to his hôtel, cursing the hour in which, confiding in the promises of the Marshal of Villars, he had abandoned his native mountains, amid which he had been as truly a monarch as Louis XIV. in the gilded galleries of Versailles.

In the course of the same evening he received an order to leave Paris, and to rejoin his regiment, which he immediately obeyed; and at Mâcon he found himself once more among those of his companions who had resolved to share his fortunes, and who were, consequently, included in the treaty. To these, without making the mortifying confession of his reception by the King, he at once hinted that he had not only lost all faith in the redemption of the promises which he had received through M. de Villars, but that he even apprehended personal danger should he remain in France; and ended by suggesting that they should all gain the frontier without delay, and seek their fortunes in another country.

The word of Cavalier was a law to his adherents; and consequently these men, without murmur or discussion, forthwith commenced their march, alike ignorant and careless as to its termination.

At Dinan they performed their devotions, and then deserting in a body the inhospitable nation which had given them birth, they traversed Mont Belliard, threw themselves into Porentruy, and took the road to Lausanne.

Aware that all was at an end as regarded his faction in France, Cavalier first proceeded to Holland, and thence to England, where he was graciously received by the Queen, and was appointed to the command of a regiment of foreign emigrants, at the head of which, at the battle of Almanza, he found himself opposed to a corps of French infantry ; when the old enemies had no sooner recognised each other than, yelling out their hate, as if by one common impulse, they rushed forward, regardless alike of discipline and order, and a perfect butchery ensued, scarcely any survivors being left on either side. Cavalier was, however, one of the few who escaped ; and, in recompense of the courage which he had displayed, he was raised to the rank of a general officer, and appointed Governor of the Isle of Wight.

He survived until 1740 in his adopted country, and finally died in Chelsea Hospital, at the age of sixty years.

The military fame of Louis XIV. and his army had, in 1702, reached its culminating point, and thenceforward it began to decline. Three great defeats ruined the strength of the united kingdoms of France and Spain : that of Vigo, where a French fleet which was escorting some Spanish galleons was compelled to self-destruction by fire, in order to prevent its capture by the enemy in the year named ; the defeat of Hochstet, where twenty-seven battalions of infantry and four regiments of dragoons were forced to surrender without striking a blow, in 1704 ; and, finally, the retreat of Ramillies, where, in 1706, the army lost all its camp-equipage and ammunition while hotly pursued, and was compelled to disband itself.

The French had been so unaccustomed to reverses under Louis XIV. that they could not induce themselves to believe that this successive ill-fortune arose from ordinary causes, such as the exhaustion of their forces or the error of their generals, but attributed it to treason; and it was ere long broadly asserted that information of all the measures decided at Versailles was sent from Meudon, where the Dauphin held his Court, to the Prince de Vaudemont, Governor of Milan, who was devoted to the interests of the Archduke—not, indeed, by the Prince himself, but by some women of rank who were in his confidence. This report, however, gradually lost credit, as it was remembered that no rational motive could be assigned for so foul, so dangerous, and so unprofitable a treachery.\*

The next suggestion was still more mischievous. The young Duchess of Bourgogne had, it was said, witnessed the progress of the war in Piedmont with as much tranquillity as though she had been born a Princess of France, but no sooner saw the army approach Turin than she apprehended the total ruin of her father, and, anxious to spare him so bitter a mortification, exerted herself strenuously to affect the raising of the siege; in which attempt she secured the cooperation of Madame de Maintenon, who, seeing the rapidity with which age was gaining upon the King, and believing that she might, upon some future day, require the support of the Duchess, lent her all the assistance in her power.

To this circumstance were accordingly attributed the

\* Louis XIV., *sa Cour, et le Régent.*

restrictions under which the Duke of Orleans assumed the command of the army in Italy, and the authority confided to the Marshal of Marsin,\* without whose sanction the Prince was forbidden to undertake any movement of importance, as well as the abandonment of the siege of Turin, after a desperate engagement, in which Marsin was killed, and the Duke of Orleans himself grievously wounded.

This accusation against the young Duchess was based upon the assertion that the Duke of Savoy, menaced even in his capital, neglected every measure of defence, and that when he eventually became uneasy at the approach of the French troops to his very walls, and wrote to the Queen of England soliciting her assistance, he received from the Duke of Marlborough, in the name of his Royal mistress, a reply to the effect that he need not be alarmed by the success of the French forces, as they had already flattered themselves wrongfully more than once on their advantages, and that upon this occasion they would do so again; while he, moreover, spoke so positively of their failure in the attack upon Turin, although it was undertaken by so strong an army, and under circumstances which ap-

\* The Count of Marsin was the descendant of a noble family of Liège, who passed into France at the age of seventeen years; and, having been appointed Major of cavalry, served in Flanders in 1690, and was wounded at Fleurus. In 1693 he was present at the battle of Nerwinde, and at the taking of Charleroi, after which he joined the army in Italy. In 1701 he was sent to Spain as Ambassador from the Court of Louis XIV. to that of Philip V. In 1703 he was created Marshal of France, and in 1704 he commanded the retreat at the battle of Hochstet. Ordered once more to Italy, he was so mortified at having caused the defeat before Turin in 1706, that he exposed himself imprudently during the engagement, and lost his life. He was the last male representative of his family.

peared to render its capture inevitable, that it was impossible to read the letter without feeling convinced his assurance was based upon solid grounds.\*

To those, however, who were not blinded by party spirit or mortified vanity, these circumstances were considered capable of perfect refutation; nor was it probable that the Duchess of Bourgogne would commit an act of treachery against the country of which she might in a short period become the Queen, in favour of her father, who, by allying himself with its enemies, was weakening its resources, rendering the Court at which she resided a scene of anxiety, and separating her from a husband to whom she was attached, and whose life was constantly endangered throughout the whole of the campaign. It is the less feasible, moreover, from the fact that not even the indignation excited by the defalcation of the Duke of Savoy in the mind of Louis XIV. even for an instant influenced his feelings towards his beloved granddaughter.

Admitting her freely into his confidence, he transacted business with his Ministers in her presence, and had the delicacy never to allow any discussion on the subject of her father to reach her ears. In private he permitted her to hang upon his neck, or to seat herself upon his knee, to torment him with her unceasing playfulness, to open and read his letters in his presence, and to take an equal liberty with those of Madame de Maintenon. She was, in short, the joy and the light of his old age—the only being who had ever compelled him to forget the Monarch in the parent, and to

\* *Histoire du Règne de Louis XIV., par Reboulet.*



acknowledge to himself that he had the feelings and the affections common to his kind; while she became doubtlessly the more endeared to him by the fact that even while she was conscious that her wishes were all-powerful, she exerted her influence only to serve those who required her aid; and that never, on any single occasion, did she utter a word which might tend to injure the humblest individual in his estimation; but affable to every one, courteous and considerate to those about her, and living with the ladies of her household in perfect harmony and friendship, she was at once the idol of the Court and the beloved of the people.

Unfortunately, amid this general homage, the Duchess distinguished with more than common favour the Marquis de Nangis, a young and gallant soldier who had attached himself to the Court of the Duke of Bourgogne.

The Prince, passionately devoted to his wife, was, as we have elsewhere stated, although possessed of moral qualities of a high order, by no means calculated personally to excite the attachment of such a nature as that of Adelaide of Savoy, while M. de Nangis, young, handsome, and graceful, at once captivated her fancy, and subjugated her reason so thoroughly, that ere long this unhappy passion was known to every one save her husband.

At the commencement of 1707 intelligence of the death of Madame de Montespan reached the Court. Another link between the present and the past was broken. For the last few years she had placed her conscience under the direction of the Père de la Tour, the General of the Oratory, and had devoted herself



entirely to her religious duties, while the first act of penance to which he compelled her was so bitter that all those by which it was succeeded became comparatively easy. This penance was no less than to address a letter to her husband, couched in the most submissive terms, in which she offered to return to him if he would condescend to receive her, or to take up her residence at whatever place he should think proper to assign. The diplomacy of her confessor was most admirable; for, when once the haughty spirit of his penitent had been bent to such a depth as this, he felt that his task would be light indeed.

It was long, however, ere Madame de Montespan could sufficiently conquer her pride and resentment to consent to such a humiliation; but the reverend father of the Oratory was no cowed courtier, ready to compromise with the conscience of his penitent, and he was at length obeyed. Humbly as the letter was dictated did she write it; but the terror of her suspense was quickly terminated; for the Marquis had no sooner received the self-abnegatory missive of his guilty wife than he caused her to be informed that he would neither admit her into his house, prescribe any rule for her future conduct, nor suffer her name to be again mentioned in his presence; and in this resolution he some time afterwards expired, without having ever overcome either his mortification at her desertion or the passion which he had never ceased to feel for her.

The death of the Marquis tended, however, to increase the difficulties of the confessor; for Madame de Montespan no sooner found herself a widow than a

new hope sprang up in her heart. Still beautiful, and convinced that the King had only been induced to discard her from conscientious motives, she could not contemplate the fact that she was at length free, and couple it with the recollection that she was the junior of Madame de Maintenon by five or six years, without believing that the weak health of her rival would soon liberate the Monarch also, whose affections, excited anew by the tenderness of their children, might again be restored to her, although the single fact should have sufficed to prove the hollowness of such an anticipation, that Louis XIV. never, even in his most indulgent moments, spoke to them of their mother, or consulted her wishes upon any subject connected with their welfare.

Her principal hope lay in the influence of her daughters and the Count of Toulouse, whom she loved more tenderly than any of her other children, and who repaid her affection in kind. From the Duke of Maine she anticipated no support, nor did she seek it; but in the respectful attachment of the young Count she imagined that she saw the pledge of her success. The Prince did not possess, like his brother, "the wit of the Mortemars," but he was the impersonation of honour, principle, and uprightness, with a deportment as affable as was consistent with a reserved and even cold expression. His rank as High-Admiral of France had induced him to make a study of his profession, and to do honour to the confidence which had been placed in him by the King. He had already given repeated proofs both of his personal courage and of his matured judgment; and, although the Monarch

preferred the society of the Duke of Maine, he nevertheless did justice to the good sense, the truthfulness, and the other sterling qualities of the Count of Toulouse.

Thus the world had once more opposed its barrier between the penitent and her spiritual director ; but it was, after a time, overthrown by the resolute firmness of the latter ; and the unhappy woman, after this last struggle, perceiving that the constant presence of her children, whom it had long been her only happiness to overwhelm with presents and caresses, tended to maintain in her breast an ambition which she had pledged herself to abandon, at length resolved to permit their visits only at long intervals, and to confine her liberality to the poor, while, not satisfied by bestowing upon them the riches which had become comparatively useless to her, she worked for several hours each day upon the coarsest and most ungainly materials, alike for the sick in the hospitals and for the needy in their squalid homes. Her table, which had hitherto been splendid and profuse, was reduced to mere frugal comfort ; and she ultimately adopted the penances of which she had formerly made a disdainful jest, and not only wore haircloth next her skin, but also an iron girdle armed with points, which at every movement lacerated her body.

Morbidly alarmed at the bare idea of death, she was accustomed, during a thunder-storm, to seat an infant upon her knees, in order that she might find protection in its innocence ; she also constantly slept with all her curtains thrown back, a number of tapers burning in her room, and several women to watch throughout the

night; and, when restless, she listened jealously to ascertain that they were either talking, gambling, or eating, in order to keep themselves awake.

Nevertheless, although subjecting herself to bodily suffering and to moral subjection, there was one darling weakness to which Madame de Montespan adhered to the last, and over which even the Père de la Tour himself had no power. The princely etiquette which she had established in her hôtel endured to the period of her death; and, by a strange caprice, the whole of the Court submitted to the ostentatious and almost insolent regulations she had adopted, and visited her zealously, she meanwhile addressing all her guests, whatever might be their rank, like a Queen receiving the homage of a circle to whose respect and deference she had a claim.\*

Always imagining herself to be in weak health, or making this idea a pretext for constant movement, Madame de Montespan was continually on the road from Paris to Bourbon-l'Archambault, thence to her estate at Antin, and thence again to Fontevrault, of which magnificent house her sister was the Abbess.

On quitting Paris for the last time for Bourbon, although, as she was even herself compelled to admit, in admirable health, she had a presentiment that she should never return, and, before her departure, paid all her pensioners—who were principally impoverished members of the nobility—a sufficient sum to enable them to exist until they could secure some other means of subsistence, declaring that she should not live to supply their further wants. Her friends smiled at her

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.

prediction; but, by a singular coincidence, she had only arrived at Bourbon a few days when, during the night of the 26th of May, her women were alarmed by seeing her struggling against suffocation, and, with considerable difficulty, extorted her consent that they should summon her confessor and her son, the Marquis d'Antin. The priest was soon at her side; but even at that moment of peril the dying woman persisted, despite the discouraging comments of her physician, to maintain that she already felt better, and should ultimately recover. Amid these protestations, however, her strength was rapidly ebbing away, and before M. d'Antin arrived she had become insensible; but this was not the circumstance which engaged the attention of her visitor; for the door of his travelling-chaise was no sooner opened than he desired a weeping attendant, who presented herself to receive him, to bring his mother's casket to the carriage, as he should not alight. The woman only replied by sobbing out that her mistress was at that moment in the death-agony.

"That is not what I asked," said the Marquis, coldly; "I inquired for her casket."

The *femme-de-chambre* disappeared, and a few minutes subsequently returned, carrying a small ebony box, clamped with silver.

"Where is the key?" inquired M. d'Antin.

"The Marchioness never intrusts it to any one; she wears it about her neck."

"Shall I, then, be compelled to enter the house and seek it myself?" he asked impatiently.

"I fear so, Monsieur; for no attendant of the Mar-

quise could be induced to perform such an office at such a moment."

Without further comment, the Marquis sprang from the chaise, rapidly ascended the stairs, and entered the death-room, where his once beautiful mother lay gasping in the last struggle of dissolution. With a steady hand he drew back the costly lace which veiled her bosom, seized the small key that rested on it, opened the casket, thrust all its contents into the pockets of his *haut-de-chausses*, and regained his carriage, without the utterance of one word unconnected with the absolute purpose of his visit.

An hour afterwards Madame de Montespan expired; and it was ascertained that she had bequeathed her body to the tomb of her family, situated at Poitiers, her heart to the convent of La Flèche, and her entrails to the priory of St. Menoux, near Bourbon. When this arrangement became public, a courtier before whom it was related exclaimed, with affected surprise, "The entrails of Madame de Montespan! Did she really possess any?"\*

A village surgeon performed the necessary duties, and separated those portions of the remains which were destined to be conveyed elsewhere from the body; after which the corpse remained a considerable time at the door of the house, while the canons of the Holy Chapel and the priests of the parish contended for a point of precedence. The heart, inclosed in a leaden case, was forwarded to La Flèche, and, finally, the intestines were deposited in a small trunk, and committed to the care of a peasant, who was in-

\* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

structed to convey them to St. Menoux. But, as though the guilty and haughty woman, who had just looked her last upon that world which had throughout her life been the object of her adoration, was destined to convey a moral to her kind, even beyond the grave, it chanced that the porter, having seated himself midway of his journey to rest, and placed the box beside him, was suddenly seized with a desire to ascertain its contents, which he had no sooner done than, believing that he was merely the jest of some comrade who desired to make merry at his expense, he emptied the trunk into the ditch beside which he sat, and had scarcely done so, when a lad who was herding swine drove them towards him, and, as they grovelled in the mire at the foot of the bank, they came upon the burden with which he had been intrusted, and in a few instants the most filthy animals in the creation had devoured a portion of the remains of one of the haughtiest women who ever trod the earth! \*

Thus perished, at the age of sixty-six, Madame de Montespan, who, after spending sixteen years in achieving an infamous celebrity, passed the succeeding twenty-two in expiating at once her folly and her guilt; nor could anything exceed the indifference with which Paris and Versailles received the intelligence of her demise, save the disgraceful want of feeling which it betrayed in her children. The Marquis d'Antin alone assumed even the outward semblance of mourning: neither the Duke of Maine, the Count of Toulouse, the Duchess of Bourbon, nor *Madame*, evinced the slightest respect to the memory of their erring,

\* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.



but not the less affectionate mother ; while, as regarded the King, to whom her will had once been a law, the news reached him as he was about to start on a shooting excursion ; and the precaution with which it was communicated by the messenger was at once rendered supererogatory by the manner in which it was received.

“ Ah, indeed,” said Louis XIV. ; “ so the Marchioness is dead ! I should have thought she would have lasted longer. Are you ready, M. de la Rochefoucauld ? I have no doubt that after this last shower the scent will lie well for the dogs. Let us be off at once.” \*

\* Chroniques de l’Œil de Bœuf.





## CHAPTER VII

Anticipations of the Dauphin—The Female Cabal—Prejudices of the Dauphin—Death of Père la Chaise—The new Confessor, Michel le Tellier ; His Portrait—Famine of 1709—Royal Plate Once More Sent to the Mint—Military Reverses—Egotism of Louis XIV.—The Duke of Fronsac—Children of the Duchess of Bourgogne—Death of the Duke of Bourbon-Condé—Marriage of the Duke of Berri ; His Portrait—Character of His Bride—The Union an Unhappy One—The Children of the Duke of Maine Created Princes of the Blood—An Unpleasant Interview—Murmurs of the Courtiers—Victory of Villa Viciosa—Death of the Emperor Joseph—Public Joy—Illness and Death of the Dauphin—A Prince and His Mistress—Dispersion of the Meudon Cabal—The Duke of Bourgogne Dauphin of France—Isolation of the Duchess of Bourbon.

**D**ESPITE the attachment which the Dauphin had always evinced towards Louis XIV., he had at this period attained his forty-eighth year, and was suspected of looking anxiously towards the throne which he was one day to inherit. The extreme jealousy with which the King had excluded him from all participation in public affairs, long after his age had rendered him eligible to assume the position to which he was entitled by his birth, and the unconquerable timidity which rendered him almost powerless in his presence, had become alike irksome and mortifying ; while there were

several about him who did not scruple to murmur openly at the long duration of a reign whose glory had for many years grown dim.

That the Prince listened at least complaisantly to these regrets is evident, from the fact that the Duchess of Bourgogne on one of her visits to Meudon, found him, in company with Mademoiselle Choin, the ladies Lillebonne, and the Duchess of Chartres, seated before a table on which lay a folio volume of engravings, representing the details of a coronation, which they were examining with so much earnestness that even her entrance did not cause them to abandon their occupation ; and the heart of the young Duchess swelled as she listened to the comments of the ladies by whom he was surrounded, and by which he was evidently both amused and gratified, as they identified him with the several ceremonies.

The imprudence of this proceeding was manifest and dangerous ; and had the Princess desired to revenge the slight and contumely to which both herself and her husband were exposed at the Court of Meudon, they had placed an efficient weapon in her hands ; for although possessed of talents and virtues of which a father might justly have been proud, the Duke of Bourgogne experienced neither confidence nor affection from the Dauphin, who had been taught by those about him to look with distrust and suspicion on a son towards whom Louis XIV. had latterly evinced an affection too long withheld.

The prejudices which had been infused into the mind of MONSEIGNEUR, and the satisfaction which he derived from the mortification of his son, were, indeed,

rendered painfully obvious during the Flemish campaign in 1708, where M. de Bourgogne commanded the army, having as his Lieutenant-General the Duke of Vendôme, one of the supporters of the cabal of Meudon, and where he experienced the greatest affronts to which a Prince of the Blood was ever exposed by a subject.

On the 20th of January, 1709, Père la Chaise expired, at the age of eighty years, during thirty-two of which he had been the director of the Royal conscience. Upon several occasions, even while both his health and his intellect continued unimpaired, he had requested permission of the King to resign so responsible an office; but his petition was rejected, and thus he was compelled to pursue his arduous task with the increasing anxiety attendant upon a consciousness that he should become each year less equal to perform it efficiently. Naturally mild and conciliating, as well as just and generous, he rarely overstepped the limits of his actual position, and even then, never, save in one fatal instance, in other than a rightful cause; while it is matter of historical record that in this solitary case he was compelled by the society of Jesuits, of which he was a member, and who exercised over him at once a watchful jealousy and a stringent control, to urge a measure against which his heart and his conscience alike revolted.

We allude, of course, to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, that awful atrocity which deluged the French provinces in blood, and cast an eternal stigma on the name and reign of Louis XIV.

Armed as he was by his moral authority over the

Monarch, Père la Chaise betrayed neither avarice, ambition, nor revenge ; and although firmly Jesuitical in principle, proved an inefficient instrument in the hands of the society, from his aversion to violence and aggression, while he was, moreover, so wanting in energy, that his indulgence was frequently inimical to the rigid performance of his religious functions. The King, on one occasion, related a reply made to him by the venerable ecclesiastic, which would amply suffice to prove this fact, were it not gratifying to believe that it was induced by the memorable persecution of the Calvinists.

“ I reproached him one day,” said Louis XIV., “ with being too supine, when he answered, ‘ It is not I who am supine, but you who are too harsh.’ ”

His charities were, moreover, unbounded, and his disinterestedness the proverb of the Court. Party spirit had sought to injure him in the opinion of posterity ; but its voice is now silenced, and justice is at length done to the memory of the good but weak old man. He was for a considerable period intrusted with the distribution of the church livings, and displayed considerable judgment in his task ; but at length the Jesuits, wearied of his gentleness and forbearance, by which their more ambitious aims were frustrated, intimated to him that it was time he should retire from office. Père la Chaise, thus supported in his own views, consequently preferred his request even more urgently than ever to the Monarch : he pleaded his increasing years, his failing intellect, his physical prostration, and implored his Majesty to leave him time to prepare himself for another world, and to suffer him to

lay down a responsibility to which he was no longer equal.

Louis XIV. was, however, resolute ; and neither the trembling limbs, the failing memory, nor the lethargic habits of the superannuated confessor could induce him to supply his place ; and thus, on the specified days and hours he continued to shut himself up with this living corpse, and to regulate with him all the affairs of his conscience. At length, however, on the morrow of one of these periodical journeys to Versailles, Père la Chaise became so seriously indisposed that the sacraments were administered, and he had no sooner partaken of them than he requested that writing materials should be brought to his bedside, when, with much difficulty, he addressed a somewhat lengthy letter to the King, which was immediately answered by the Monarch with his own hand, and thenceforward the octagenarian confessor devoted himself entirely to God.

Two brother Jesuits watched beside his pillow, the Père le Tellier, Provincial of the Order, and the Père Daniel, Director of the Seminary. During the intervals of prayer these officials put two questions to the dying man, the first of which was, whether he had fulfilled all the requirements of his conscience ? and the second, if, during his last hours of influence over the King, he had secured the welfare and honour of the society ? To their inquiries he answered that his conscience was at peace, and that it would soon be seen that he had done his duty to the brotherhood. After having given this double assurance to his companions, the exhausted old man was permitted to expire

in peace; and a few hours subsequently he breathed his last.

At the *lever* of Louis XIV. two other Jesuits presented themselves, and delivered to the King the keys of his late confessor's cabinet, in which he had left a number of papers, supposed to be confidential. They were courteously received; and in the presence of the assembled attendants the Monarch moreover uttered an earnest panegyric on the virtues of the deceased ecclesiastic.

For several years Père la Chaise had strongly urged his Royal penitent to select his successor from the Society of Jesus, earnestly impressing upon him both the avowed and covert power to which its members had attained, and the danger to which he would inevitably expose himself by choosing his confessor from any other brotherhood; and this was a suggestion which was not likely to be disregarded. The King was anxious to enjoy the remnant of his existence in peace; and he accordingly despatched the Dukes of Chevreuse and of Beauvilliers to ascertain which individual of the society was, in every point of view, the most worthy of the honour he was about to confer, when their selection fell upon Père le Tellier.\*

To Louis XIV. this Jesuit was personally unknown, nor had he even been aware of his existence until, a short time previous to his death, when Père la Chaise had included his name in a list which he delivered to

\* Michel le Tellier was a native of Vère in Normandy, was born in 1643, the son of a poor peasant, and in 1661 entered the Society of Jesuits. He pursued his studies in the college of Louis le Grand, and ultimately died in exile at La Flèche in 1719. He was a member of the French Academy.



the King, and in which he had particularised the individuals whom he considered the most eligible to succeed to the high office that must so soon become vacant.

Michel le Tellier was heart and soul a Jesuit, having passed through all the degrees of the society, and been in turn professor, theologian, rector, provincial, and controversialist. Jealous of the honour and advancement of his own order, he was merciless towards every other religious sect; an able and zealous proselytist, he was unscrupulous as to the means by which he insured his object; and self-centred and cold, he had no sympathy with his fellow-men, not even with those of his own confraternity, save as they advocated his principles and facilitated his measures.

His intellect, at once concentrated, determined, and indefatigable, was incessantly applied to questions of importance; and he disdained, or rather could not comprehend, the cultivation of those more refined and elegant accomplishments by which it would have been at once relieved and embellished. A resolute enemy of amusement and relaxation of every description, he exacted from others the same perpetual labour to which he was himself devoted; and, gifted with a frame of iron, and a power of mental endurance almost unparalleled, would never admit the necessity of rest. In disposition he was deceitful, treacherous, and cunning; ever misleading those who confided in his sincerity, and then sneering at the dupes whom he had made.

Rapacious and exacting, his hand was extended only to receive; egotistical and avaricious, his heart

was closed against every appeal; prompt to promise, and equally ready to falsify his pledge when it interfered with closer interests, he was unrelenting in his vengeance upon those who reproached him with his perfidy; ignorant of the most common courtesies of civilised society, and retaining all the original coarseness of his birth, he was nevertheless insolent and overbearing. In fine, he was a man to shun, and an enemy to deprecate, for his whole nature was absorbed in the single idea of self-aggrandisement and personal revenge. At once hard and impetuous, his heart resembled a volcano, whose lava, when it has ceased to burn, turns into stone.

On the occasion of his first presentation, Louis XIV. saw himself approached by a man of repulsive exterior, with a gloomy physiognomy, a ferocious squint, and a dogged but still ill-assured demeanour. As soon as he was announced, and had advanced into the cabinet, the Monarch inquired, with a smile, if he were a relative as well as a namesake of his former Minister.

"I, Sire!" exclaimed the Jesuit, with a reverence so profound that it seemed as though he sought to humble himself to the very earth—"I a kinsman of the Minister! I am, indeed, far from advancing such a claim, being merely the son of a poor peasant of Lower Normandy."

Such was the advent of Michel le Tellier at Court, where his name was soon to become the watchword of terror and persecution.\*

In the same year France was visited by a fearful famine. The olive-trees of the south proved barren,

\* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

the fruit-trees remained leafless, and brought forth no produce, while the corn perished on the ground before the seed had formed. The storehouses throughout the kingdom being exhausted, an effort was made to import grain from the Levant, but the merchant-ships were captured by the vessels of the enemy; and while the French army was daily perishing from hunger, the Dutch were vending to the hostile forces, without increase of price, every description of provision.

Once more Louis XIV. sent his plate to the mint, but he did so in direct opposition to the advice of the Chancellor and the Controller-General, who represented in vain that, while such a measure was inefficient to supply the wants of the people, it betrayed the extent of their distress to the enemy. Famine rendered the populace desperate; and, for the first time, Louis the Great was condemned to see himself placarded ignominiously, not only in the public thoroughfares, but even upon the pedestals of the statues which had been erected in his honour. The Dauphin, whose popularity had never failed, dared no longer be seen in the streets of the Capital, for his carriage was no sooner recognised than it was surrounded by famishing crowds, who cried aloud to him for bread, and he was unable to comply with their demands. In this extremity a new tax was proposed, which was named the *tax of the tenths*, from its involving a tenth of the revenue—a burden so excessive that it was for a considerable time resisted by the Monarch, who felt that, however it might be justified by the necessities of the crisis, the imposition was so heavy as to leave upon his mind considerable doubt as to his right to levy so

extreme a contribution. This scruple was, however, removed by his confessor, and a week subsequently the edict was promulgated.

The conscience of the King was tranquillised by the recollection that his own sacrifice had produced the sum of four hundred thousand livres, that most of the principal nobles had followed his example, and that Madame de Maintenon no longer ate any but oaten bread; and under these circumstances he did not even hesitate to propose a peace with Holland.

Well, indeed, might Louis XIV. sigh for peace, when he was compelled to witness the fearful exigencies which had been the result of his headlong and uncompromising ambition. He had lost, successively, the four great battles of Blenheim, Ramillies, Turin, and Malplaquet. By the first defeat he had been deprived not only of a formidable army, but also of all the country situated between the Danube and the Rhine, while the same engagement had cost the hereditary possessions of his ally, the Prince of Bavaria; Ramillies had involved the loss of the whole of Flanders, and a retreat which had only been arrested at the gates of Lille; Turin had wrested from him the possession of Italy, with the exception of a few fortified towns, and even these were ready to be surrendered to the Emperor of Germany in consideration of his permitting a free passage to the fifteen thousand men by whom they were then garrisoned; and, finally, the battle of Malplaquet had driven back the French arms from the banks of the Sambre to Valenciennes.

Nothing could exceed the gloom which hung over the Court. For the first time it did not pause upon

the Royal threshold, but made its scowl visible even in the sculptured galleries of Versailles, and in the gilded saloons of Marly, where, instead of the heaps of gold which had so lately cumbered the tables and changed owners on the fortune of a card, the great and the haughty were to be seen testing the oats, and barley, and pulse, which had been fashioned into bread, in order to decide which would suffice the best, if not to satisfy, at least to cheat, the hunger of an exhausted populace.

The only resource of the King in this time of trouble he found in the affection and the fascinations of the Duchess of Bourgogne, whose power over his heart continued unabated. It was, however, long ere she recovered her spirits after the death of *Monsieur*; and she had scarcely done so, when, having imprudently bathed after eating a quantity of fruit, she became seriously indisposed; and as this illness occurred during the month of August, at which period the King was accustomed to visit Marly, and as his affection even for herself was not sufficiently disinterested to induce him either to defer his own removal, or to leave her to terminate her recovery at Versailles, she was compelled to bear him company—a fatigue which so greatly exasperated the worst symptoms of her disorder, that she was soon declared to be at the point of death, and this was no sooner the case than the Monarch, Madame de Maintenon, and the Duke of Bourgogne were in despair, believing that the prediction of the astrologer was about to be verified.

Youth and a happy constitution, however, ultimately triumphed, and she was no sooner declared convales-

cent than Louis XIV., anxious to return to Versailles, was about to destroy all the new-born hopes to which this amendment had given birth, by once more dragging her from her bed to perform a second journey; nor was it without much difficulty that the entreaties of Madame de Maintenon, and the declaration of the physicians that this new exertion must inevitably prove fatal, prevailed with him to delay his departure for another week, at the termination of which interval the invalid was transported from her bed at Meudon, to that at Versailles, where she was compelled to remain a prisoner for a considerable period.

The convalescence of the Duchess was still progressing when a new courtier made his appearance in the Royal circle, who at once attracted universal attention. Francis Armand, Duke of Fronsac, subsequently so famous under the reign of Louis XV. as the Duke of Richelieu, was then barely fifteen years of age, and had already become the husband of Mademoiselle de Noailles, in virtue of a compact made between their mutual parents three years before his birth. The resolute estrangement of the boy-Duke from his enforced bride, combined with his extraordinary personal beauty and fearless disposition, at once made him the idol of the Court, where he had no sooner arrived than he became passionately attached to the Duchess of Bourgogne, who, on her side, received his homage with an imprudence which soon rendered their mutual preference a matter of so much publicity that the King, indignant alike at the presumption of De Fronsac and the levity of his granddaughter, condemned the young Duke to the Bastille, where, for

fourteen months, he remained a close prisoner, little suspecting that he was then merely serving his apprenticeship to captivity, and that he was fated to find himself, on four different occasions, an inmate of the same Royal and gloomy fortress.

Amid all these intrigues the Duchess had, meanwhile, become the mother of two sons, one of whom was already dead, while the other was not long destined to survive, and who had each received at its birth the appellation of Duke of Bretagne.\*

Three important events took place in the family of Louis XIV. during the year 1710: the death of the Duke of Bourbon-Condé, his son-in-law; the marriage of his grandson, the Duke of Berri; and the rank conceded to the offspring of the Duke of Maine.

M. de Bourbon survived his father, the Prince Henri Jules de Condé, only eleven months; and thus passed his whole life in a state of mental and moral vassalage to a stern and capricious father. He was brave, passionate, generous, and satirical, sparing neither friend nor foe in his moments of anger or in his intervals of bitterness, and at once a fond, a jealous, and an imperious husband. By his death a second of the daughters of the King became a widow.

After speaking of a Prince who at once destroyed his own happiness and that of those about him, turn we to another, whose amiable qualities, estimable virtues, and winning disposition, secured to him the hearts of all around him, save, unfortunately, that over which he the most strenuously sought to obtain an empire. The Duke of Berri, the third son of the

\* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.



Dauphin, was at once good-looking and graceful, fond of society and social pleasures, accessible and courteous, utterly devoid of personal vanity, but by no means deficient in dignity. Full of good sense and manliness, an accomplished listener, and of sound judgment, he was truthful, just, and pious, but without either asceticism or gloom. Possessed of considerable firmness, he could not endure restraint—a fact which induced apprehensions that, as he attained to manhood, he would not prove so amenable as might be desired in a younger branch of the Royal family—and, in consequence, he received so many and such violent checks, that he became timid and embarrassed in all affairs of business. His governors and preceptors, while endeavouring to suppress his moral energies, had laboured to fix his attention upon literature and science, but they only succeeded in disgusting him with both; and like the Dauphin, of whom he was the favourite child, this disgust endured throughout his life. He also resembled his father in his dread of Louis XIV., and trembled when he addressed him on any subject more serious than a game of hazard or the details of a hunt.

Two Princesses aspired to his hand for their daughters—the Duchess of Bourbon and the Duchess of Orleans. The first was high in the favour of the Dauphin, and the second in that of Madame de Maintenon, with whom she cultivated a close friendship, and of whose influence she had the greatest need, in order to secure the success of her hopes. Mademoiselle d'Orleans, even at an early age, was dissipated, vain of her personal charms, and initiated into all the vices of a Court life. Slander had already been busy



PORETS OF THE PORTLAND CEMENT



BOURBON-CONDÉ  
(LEONIS II, LE GRAND)  
1621-1686





with her name ; but she was no sooner made aware of the possibility which there existed of her one day becoming the wife of the Duke of Berri, than she conducted herself with so much art and cast so impervious a veil over her natural propensities, that for two years previously to her marriage Madame de Maintenon heard constant encomiums upon her modesty and retiring habits.

Convinced that her fortune depended upon her deportment, Mademoiselle d'Orleans at Versailles was at once so graceful and so exemplary that no suspicion was entertained of her real disposition ; and the constraint to which she thus voluntarily subjected herself was the less extraordinary, as at the age of twelve years, some time before she appeared at court, on discovering that she was likely to increase in size, and thus to mar her beauty, she had resolutely condemned herself to abstinence and exercise, although naturally both sensual and indolent.\*

The marriage proved unfortunate. The extreme affection of the Prince, and the readiness with which he acceded to the caprices of his beautiful young wife, might have produced a happy effect upon a less faulty disposition, but could have no such result as regarded the new Duchess, who, from the very day succeeding their union, revenged herself upon the restraint of the last two years, and showed herself in all her haughtiness and impropriety. For her husband she disdained even to affect attachment, openly ridiculing his intellect, and making a jest of what she termed his bigotry. Her egotism and irregularity were a constant misery to the

\* Lettres de Madame de Caylus.

Duke, who, thrall'd as he was by her extreme loveliness, could not remain blind to her vices ; while the Duchess of Bourgogne, who had strenuously exerted herself to forward the marriage, and who had believed that it would prove a new source of happiness to herself, was compelled to feel that she had only raised up another and a formidable enemy, who, jealous of her influence over the King, and of the increasing favour of her husband, was covertly exerting every stratagem to separate the brothers, in which attempt she was, however, frustrated by their mutual affection.

While zealously employed in securing advantageous establishments to his daughters, Louis XIV. had, however, by no means been unmindful of the interests of his legitimated sons ; and a feeling of compunction made him look with different eyes upon the children who had been born to the throne and those who could advance their claim only through himself. He regarded the first as the offspring of the nation, great in themselves, and requiring no extraneous privileges ; while he looked upon the last as blameless but unfortunate beings, separated by law from the crown, and depending solely upon his own power.

Pride and affection alike urged their cause ; and to withdraw them from their position of enforced inferiority, was a resolution which flattered his vanity as much as it gratified his heart. In 1694 Louis XIV. had given, both to the Duke of Maine and to the Count of Toulouse, the precedence over all the other Peers ; but this distinction was merely personal, and the children of the Duke of Maine were without tangible rank. The reflection was painful to him ; and, ac-



cordingly, on the evening of the 15th of March, 1710, when he had risen from supper, and given the order of the day according to his usual habit, he walked with even more than his accustomed gravity to the outer cabinet, where he was followed by the Court; and placing himself before his *fauteuil*, but still remaining seated, he glanced slowly round the circle, and then, without addressing any particular individual, he declared that from that hour he gave to the children of the Duke of Maine the same rank and the same honours held by their father.

A deep silence followed this announcement, and before it ceased the Monarch passed on into his private closet, desiring the Dauphin and the Duke of Bourgogne to follow. The Princes obeyed; and then, for the first time in his life, the proud and absolute Sovereign humbled himself before his son and his grandson, and entreated them, when they should reign in their turn, to secure to the offspring of the Duke of Maine, the privileges which he had just accorded to them, from affection for himself, and in consideration of his attachments for their parents; adding that he was then old, and that he asked this favour of them out of the respect which they would bear to his memory.

The Princes remained silent; and at length, hopeless of receiving an answer, the King summoned to the conference the Duke of Maine, who was pacing the outer cabinet, where no word had yet been spoken; and, leaning heavily upon his shoulder in order to compel him to bend before the Princes, he again reiterated his request, to which they replied only by a few inaudible words. The Duke of Maine, becoming

alarmed lest they should resist the appeal, then voluntarily moved a step forward, and prepared to throw himself at their feet, when Louis XIV., with tears streaming from his eyes, implored the Dauphin and his son to embrace the Duke in his presence, as an earnest of their consent. The Princes, more and more bewildered, merely, however, stammered a few more inarticulate and unmeaning words, and the King walked back to his chair.

All was still silent; and after the pause of a moment he again glanced round the assembly, observing that it would afford him pleasure that the Court should offer their congratulations to the Duke of Maine—a command which was complied with on the instant; and while the discomfited courtiers were engaged in this ungenial duty, an order was given by the Monarch to the Grand Master of the Ceremonies to record the event in his register.

The crowd had, however, no sooner quitted the state apartments than a general murmur rose on all sides. The feelings of the Dauphin and the Duke of Bourgogne had been sufficiently visible throughout the whole ceremony to assure the assistants that by them at least the common discontent would be appreciated; nor was it long ere the King, whose spies were dispersed throughout the palace, was informed of the universal clamour raised against the measure which he had just adopted; and, wounded and alarmed, he was on the point of retracting his given promise, when Madame de Maintenon, by whom he had been urged to this unpopular demonstration, called to her aid the Duke and Duchess of Maine, who, assisted

by their partisans, surrounded the wavering Monarch with flatteries and ecomiums, expatiating on his power, his justice, and his generosity, and assuring him that the promptitude with which his wishes had been obeyed by the whole Court sufficiently testified the ardour with which they entered into his views, while the citizens were, on their side, unanimous in their applause.

Louis XIV. was old : in his most palmy days he had been gratified by the servility of those about him ; and now, when he was bowed by years, and that his laurels had been rudely rent, he clung more tenaciously than ever to his power of compelling obedience. For a while he hesitated ; but the blandishments of his daughter-in-law, the arguments of Madame de Maintenon, and the entreaties of the Duke of Maine proved irresistible, and the decision was not revoked.\*

The famous victory of Villa Viciosa, gained by the Duke of Vendôme, together with the death of the Emperor Joseph about this period, infused new life into the despondent kingdom of France. The league formerly formed against Louis XIV. had for its object to prevent his possessing at once France, Spain, America, Lombardy, and the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily ; and it was now immediately felt that the succession of Charles VI. to the Crown of Austria, the Empire of Germany, and the pretensions of his father to Spain and America, would, if ratified by the other powers, become as fatal an imprudence as that which they had previously laboured to prevent, and render the Emperor of Germany as powerful as they had dreaded to behold the King of France.

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.

Paris was in a turmoil of delight ; Versailles teemed with joy and gratulation. The glories of past years appeared to live again ; but the old age of Louis XIV. was fated to expiate the errors of his youth. In April, 1711, the Dauphin, when on his way to Meudon, encountered at Chaville a priest who was carrying the holy viaticum to a dying man. He immediately stopped his carriage, alighted, and with the Duchess of Bourgogne, by whom he was accompanied, knelt until the priest had passed, when, on inquiring of what malady the sufferer was dying, he was informed that it was smallpox. This disorder was the perpetual terror of the Dauphin, who had been only slightly affected by it in his youth, and he shuddered at the reply, although at the moment he made no remark ; but on the same evening, when conversing with his physician, he observed that he should be by no means surprised if, in a few days, he were attacked by the disease.

On the following day he rose at his usual hour, in order to attend a wolf hunt, but, while dressing, he became faint, and fell back in his chair. His physician immediately compelled him to return to bed ; and he had scarcely complied ere he was seized with fever. An hour subsequently the King was informed of his indisposition ; but he attached no importance to the circumstance, believing it to be merely one of those temporary ailments to which the Prince was subject. The Duke and Duchess of Bourgogne, however, although far from apprehending the extent of the danger, hurried to his bedside, and lavished upon him all the care and watchfulness which must otherwise have devolved upon his attendants ; nor did they quit him

for an instant until they were compelled to attend the supper of the King, whom they assured of the gravity of the Dauphin's attack.

On the ensuing morning Louis XIV. was assured, on his awaking, that the life of the Prince was in extreme peril, when he instantly declared that he should hasten to Meudon, and remain there, whatever might be the nature of the disease, until the recovery of his son, forbidding at the same time that any one should follow him who had not previously had the smallpox, particularly any member of the Royal family.

The disease in due time declared itself, and the Prince rallied so perceptibly that he was believed to be out of danger—an announcement which so thoroughly tranquillised the King that he presided at the Council, and worked with his Ministers as usual, paying two and sometimes three visits a day to the invalid, and on every occasion approaching his bedside. As the convalescence progressed, the Dames de la Halle, the faithful adherents of the Dauphin, once more appeared to tender their congratulations; and the Prince, grateful for this unswerving attachment, caused them once more to be admitted to his chamber—an indulgence which they repaid with such enthusiasm that they rushed towards his bed, and kissed his feet through the coverlet; after which they retired again to sing a *Te Deum*, and to rejoice the Capital with the intelligence of the recovery.

Thus did things progress until the 14th, when MON-SEIGNEUR complained of increased suffering; his face became frightfully swelled, his fever augmented, and he fell into delirium. The Princess of Conti ap-

proached his bed, and spoke to him, but he did not recognise her.

At four in the afternoon he had sunk so perceptibly that his physician proposed additional advice; but Fagon, who was present, positively refused to admit any further aid, and peremptorily forbade that the Monarch should be informed of this relapse until he had supped; and, accordingly, the King was actually at table while the august invalid continued to sink in so rapid a manner that all those about him were at once terrified and bewildered. Fagon himself, alarmed at the responsibility which he had assumed, applied one remedy upon another, but all were without effect, while the curate of Meudon, who went every evening to the palace to ascertain the health of the Prince, on reaching the staircase, finding the doors open and the attendants absent, entered at once into the sick-chamber, and rushing towards the dying man, flung himself upon his knees, and began to talk to him of another world.

The Dauphin was still conscious, but he had nearly lost the power of articulation. The Priest, however, wrung from him a few disjointed words, intended as a confession, dictated to him a few prayers, which the expiring Dauphin attempted to follow, as he beat his breast feebly with his nerveless hand, and the curate was repaid for his pious zeal by the gentle pressure of the sick man's fingers.

The King had just risen from table when Fagon met him with a look of terror, exclaiming that there was no longer any hope, for that the Dauphin was then dying.

Louis XIV. staggered, and had nearly fallen ; but rallying on the instant, he hurried towards the chamber of his son, and was about to enter, when the Princess of Conti thrust him back, exclaiming that he must henceforward think only of himself. The blow was too sudden, and the aged Monarch fainted upon a sofa, which he afterwards refused to quit, demanding of every one who left the chamber if his son were indeed beyond help. Madame de Maintenon endeavoured in vain to induce him to retire ; he persisted in his determination to remain upon the spot until the Dauphin was no longer in life.

The last agony endured throughout an hour, and for the whole of that period Louis XIV. sat near the door of the death-room, until at length Fagon announced that all was over ; when he tottered towards his chamber, supported by Madame de Maintenon, the Duchess of Bourgogne, and the Princess of Conti ; and the King had no sooner left Meudon than all the courtiers who were in the palace hurried, as usual, to escape in their turn, taking possession of the first carriages which drew up, without waiting to ascertain the names of their owners. In half an hour Meudon was deserted.

The Feuillants,\* who, according to the privilege of

\* A religious fraternity which originated at Feuillants, a village near Rieux (Upper Garonne) in 1575, and was founded by John de la Barrière. The monks went barefooted and bareheaded, slept on planks, used only earthen vessels, and ate upon their knees ; but a general chapter of the order held in 1595 ameliorated in some degree the severity of these rules. The order was divided into two congregations—that of France being known as Our Lady of the Feuillants, and that of Italy as the Reformed Brothers of St. Bernard. The costume was a white robe without a scapulary, a hood of the same colour,



their order, claimed the right of praying beside the body of the Prince, were not permitted to perform this sacred duty ; and the remains of the Dauphin were left during forty-eight hours in the chapel, perfectly deserted, until Dumont, the faithful attendant of MON-SEIGNEUR, indignant at so indecent a disregard of the common usages of civilised society, summoned from their cloister six Capuchin monks of the convent of Meudon, who, in default of the privileged Feuillants, repeated the service for the dead, and performed the customary duties towards the body of the Prince.

These preparatory rites were, however, very inefficiently concluded ; for the corpse was deposited unembalmed in a plain coffin, standing upon tressels, which was not even covered by the Royal pall sprinkled with *fleur-de-lis*, habitually used for members of the Royal family, but simply by that of the parish church of Meudon, while the funeral procession was equally undignified and squalid. The body was placed in a bright-coloured carriage, which, being too short, permitted a portion of the coffin to appear beyond it ; and not a single mourning-coach followed to the grave the son of Louis XIV. and the heir to the throne of France.

The indignation of the populace, as this strange procession made its way to the Royal vaults of St. Denis, was loudly and fearlessly expressed. "Why did they not demand a subscription ?" was asked by several in the crowd ; "the citizens of Paris would gladly have contributed a million of livres to have

round in front, and terminating in a point behind. The Feuillants possessed in France eighty communities and an hospital.

saved the Court so deep a degradation as this !” “ Where,” demanded others, “ are the Dukes of Bourgogne and Berri ? Where are the sons of the dead Prince ? ” but they asked in vain : those who followed the Dauphin to his last resting-place were knit to him by no ties of blood.\*

The hands of strangers stretched him in his tomb.

The King regretted in the dead Prince a respectful son, whose docility and obedience had never failed ; while the nation saw the hope which it had entertained from the known goodness of his character frustrated forever. To the courtiers, however, his death was a relief ; for they had begun to feel their position difficult, between a Monarch whose robust old age gave promise of a prolonged life, and a Prince who, in his fiftieth year, had begun to weary of his dependence.

The actual blank left by his death was merely that occasioned by his high station ; for as regarded his individuality he was almost *null*. Obstinate beyond measure, his life had been a mere tissue of puerilities, to which he had attached all the importance that others would have reserved for great and striking events. Mild from indolence rather than from temperament, he was fearful of yielding to anger from the disagreeable effect which it invariably produced upon his system ; while, familiar to excess with his attendants, he entered into the most minute details of their several duties and expenditure, and questioned them in a manner which occasionally produced the most extraordinary impression.

Utterly insensible to the sorrows or sufferings of

\* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

others, and reserved to a degree which closed his lips upon every subject save those in which he chanced to be immediately interested, he never, throughout the whole of their acquaintance, made a single communication even to Mademoiselle Choin on politics, or any other topic of public interest; and the only occasion upon which he ever evinced any anxiety as to her own fate in the event of his death, was when he departed for the army, and on taking leave placed a paper in her hand which he desired her to read. This was a will, in which he had bequeathed to her an income of a hundred thousand livres; but Mademoiselle Choin had no sooner cast her eyes over the document than she tore it into fragments, remarking that while he lived she could desire no such sacrifice, and that, should she have the misfortune to survive him, a thousand crowns annually would suffice for her subsistence in a convent, which amount she had already inherited from her family.

At the death of the Prince Mademoiselle Choin re-deemed her word. She had never received from her royal lover (or husband) more than sixteen hundred louis each year, which he paid her every quarter, placing the money in her hand on the appointed day, without the subtraction or addition of a livre. Nor was he less matter-of-fact at the period of his death, having taken Mademoiselle Choin strictly at her word, and never once mentioned her name in any one of the multitudinous papers which he left behind him. The Monarch was, however, more generous; for upon the demise of the Dauphin he conferred upon her, unsolicited, a pension of ten thousand livres, when she im-

mediately withdrew from the Court, and, establishing herself at Paris, lived to an advanced age in perfect retirement.

With the Dauphin expired the cabal of Meudon, which had long been tottering to its fall. The Prince de Vaudemont,\* who had been its chief support, had lost his favour in consequence of the defection of the Princes of Lorraine, who were his cousins, and whose conduct he was suspected to have sanctioned, and had consequently no hold upon the Court save through his nieces, the ladies Lillebonne; while even this was broken by the marriage of Elisabeth with Louis de Melun, Prince of Epinoi, who, once secure herself, cultivated the friendship of Madame de Maintenon, to whom she revealed the secrets of her party, in order to insure her reception by the Court; while her sister, who could not brook mere toleration where she had so long reigned through the favour of the Dauphin, and was moreover conscious that she had, by her ill offices, irritated the Duchess of Bourgoyne, departed for Lorraine with her uncle, where she proposed to reside for a few months, until she had determined her future plans.

During that period, the smallpox having carried off several of the children of the Duchess of Lorraine, and among others a daughter of eight years of age, whom she had recently caused to be elected Abbess of Remiremont, the abbey was offered to the acceptance of Mademoiselle de Lillebonne, and she suc-

\* The Prince de Vaudemont was celebrated for his famous retreat before the Marshal of Villeroy, after the battle of Namur, when he was about to be attacked by an army of 24,000 men.

ceeded to the dignity with an income of forty thousand livres.

After this event the remainder of the circle dispersed. The two daughters of the King, who had been sincerely attached to the Dauphin, were very differently affected by his loss. The Princess of Conti withdrew into comparative retirement, and found consolation in the society of a few chosen friends, by whom she was continually surrounded; while the grief of the Duchess of Bourbon-Condé, which was at first immoderate, was not lessened by the position in which she found herself when deprived of his support. Disliked by Madame de Maintenon, in open rupture not only with the Duchess of Bourgonne, but also with the Duke of Maine, and with the Duchess of Orleans, her sister, she was, moreover, at law with her husband's family, destitute of one powerful friend, and the mother of a son barely eighteen years of age, two daughters approaching to womanhood, over whom she had already lost all control, and several children yet infants. In this position she found herself compelled to regret even her husband and her father-in-law, for whose loss she had never previously mourned; but as hers was a nature by no means adapted to despondency, she shortly shook off her grief, and, plunging into a vortex of pleasure and dissipation, became once more the haughty and unprincipled woman of former days.



## CHAPTER VIII

Increasing Confidence of Louis XIV. in the Duke of Bour-  
gogne; Its Effect upon His Character; His Court; His Mode  
of Life; His Political Liberality—Heedlessness and Ready  
Wit of the Dauphiness—The Fatal Present—The Dauphiness  
Poisoned; Her Death—Regrets of the Nation—Sickness and  
Death of the Dauphin—Despair of Louis XIV.—The Duke  
of Bretagne Declared Dauphin; His Death—The Treble  
Interment—The Duchess of Ventadour—Narrow Escape of  
the Duke of Anjou—Death of the Duke of Berri—Accusation  
Against the Duke of Orleans—Popular Tumult—Court Fac-  
tions—The Duke of Orleans Applies to be put on His Trial;  
Is Refused—Mediation of M. de Pontchartrain—Departure  
of the Duke from Paris—Unpopularity of Louis XIV.—  
Profligacy of the Duchess of Berri—Private Sorrows of the  
King.

**L**OUIS XIV., after the death of his son, became  
more unreserved with the Duke of Bourgogne,  
who, on the demise of his father, assumed in his turn  
the title of Dauphin. He forthwith began to confide  
to him the national diplomacy, and to invest him with  
an importance to which he had never hitherto at-  
tained; and the result of this policy was immediately  
perceptible. The Prince, who had until this period  
been timid, self-centred, constrained, and cold, be-  
came affable, accessible, and less disposed to render  
inconveniently conspicuous his extraordinary erudi-

tion; by which (perhaps involuntary) habit he had estranged the late Dauphin—who, conscious of his own mental deficiency, could not brook the superiority of his son—and occasionally humbled the King, who was the more inclined to take offence upon the slightest pretext, that Madame de Maintenon spared no exertion to injure the Duke in the estimation of the Monarch, in order that he should not obtain credit in the event of his complaining of the levity of his wife.\*

Hitherto M. de Bourgonne had appeared, when in the Court circle, like a man who felt that he was wasting time which might have been more worthily employed; shrinking before the mortifications to which he was exposed from the Meudon cabal, and spending entire days in his study, where he divided his hours between works of devotion and books of science. The surprise was consequently great and general when he was seen to unbend, and to show himself frequently in public; to do the honours of Marly with a face beaming in smiles, and gradually to substitute for the puerilities which had heretofore composed the conversation of the circle, subjects combining interest with amusement; which, from their very novelty, enchained the attention of the courtiers, who felt that they were obtaining information even while the time passed more speedily than it had ever previously done, either at the gaming-table or in the idle gossip of the Court.

It is, however, by no means doubtful that, blended with this new faculty of enjoyment, the noble guests of Meudon found an added charm in the eloquence

\* Lettres de Madame Charlotte-Elisabeth de Bavière, Duchesse de Orleans.



and intellect of their new idol, when they remembered that he was now the heir to the French throne, and contemplated the promise which he gave of filling it with a dignity and ability far superior to those which had been possessed by his father. Nothing could exceed the rapidity with which he won the admiration, the esteem, and the attachment of those with whom he came into contact, and the vehemence with which they disclaimed their former estimate of his character. The Duke of Beauvilliers was besieged with exclamations of wonder, but he admitted no change in the actual disposition of his pupil; such as he now appeared in public, as he declared, such he had always been in private, while it was merely circumstances which had developed his natural qualities, and not those qualities which had been the growth of circumstances.

Madame de Maintenon, enchanted by the popularity of the Duke of Bourgogne, because it reflected upon the Dauphiness, and delighted to see the grandson of the King give promise of a future fraught with honour, also abdicated all her ill will, and, by embracing his interests and forwarding his views, materially augmented the tardy attachment of the King himself. She initiated the Prince into the demeanour most agreeable to the jealous self-worship of Louis XIV., and taught him at once to adopt a more marked expression of respect and submission to his will than he had hitherto done, and to assume a more courtier-like assiduity about his person, while these attentions, strengthened by the tenderness felt by the King for the young Duchess, soon produced a marked altera-

tion in his deportment to the Dauphin. Louis XIV. had never ceased to enact the Sovereign towards his son, but he became a father, and an indulgent one, to his grandson.

The Dauphin was at this period nearly thirty years of age, and although his career was destined to be short, it was eminently useful to the nation, for he applied himself with vigour to the studies necessary to enable him to perform the duties to which he was apparently about to be called at no very distant period; while, in order efficiently to master this new science, he abandoned all minor pursuits, and spent his time between his religious exercises, which he somewhat abridged, and the public business, to which he paid a zealous and unwearied attention. The more he found himself agreeable and necessary to the Monarch, the more submissive and self-abnegating he became, nor did he once betray a symptom of impatience to ascend the throne, upon whose step he already stood.

In his own immediate circle he showed himself anxious to be surrounded only by men of character and probity; rejected personal pomp as a mere accessory, wearisome in its action, and injurious to the interests of the people, and carried his respect for the public privileges so far as to declare that sovereigns were made for their people, and not the people for their sovereigns—a great but hitherto unacknowledged truth, which he boldly uttered unhidden in the very presence of Louis XIV. himself.

Nor was the Dauphiness more constrained in the expression of her sentiments. She had now attained her twenty-seventh year, and although the graces of

her girlhood had vanished, she had retained the fascinations which were originally its greatest charm, and had superadded to these the more matured dignity of graceful womanhood. At once playful and strong-minded, the King appreciated her judgment while he was soothed by her tenderness, and not even her faults had been able to alienate for a moment the affection which he had vowed to her from their first meeting.

A ready wit, which repaired the imprudence of a thoughtless disposition, was conspicuous throughout her life, and was evinced on one occasion when the conversation had turned upon the policy of Anne of England. "Aunt," she exclaimed heedlessly to Madame de Maintenon, "it must be confessed that in England the Queens govern their kingdom more judiciously than the Kings;" but immediately conscious of a mistake, perhaps more calculated than any other to wound and anger Louis XIV., she continued, in the same breath, "Do you know why? Because it is generally women who are influential under a king, and men who influence the decisions of a queen." \*

On the 3d of February, 1712, the Duke of Noailles presented to the Dauphiness a box of Spanish snuff, with which she was delighted; and the rather perhaps that it was a habit in which she indulged unknown to the King, whose abhorrence of tobacco in every shape we have elsewhere noticed. After having profited by this present, the Duchess placed the box upon a table in her study, where she could recur to it at pleasure, while no one had access to the apartment without her

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.

special permission. On the 5th she spent a considerable part of the day with the Monarch, in continual exertions to interest and amuse him, and at five o'clock retired to her apartments, where she several times had recourse to the forbidden luxury. Two hours subsequently she was attacked by shivering fits which menaced fever, and threw herself upon her bed, in order to recover sufficient strength to enable her to attend the supper of the King; but she soon found herself so much worse that she had neither energy nor courage to undertake such a fatigue.

On the following morning, however, after having suffered severely from fever throughout the night, she made an effort to rise, and although sick and stupefied, still contrived to perform her usual duties; but after sunset had a relapse which deprived her of rest, and on the morrow she complained of a sharp and settled pain above one of her temples, which was so excruciating that when the visit of the King was announced to her, she sent to implore him not to enter her chamber. A few hours subsequently she became delirious, and continued so until the following day, the disease resisting every remedy, although she was copiously bled, and that opium was administered in large doses.

So sudden and extraordinary an indisposition deluged the Court with dark and indignant rumours, and as at that period few sudden deaths had occurred which were not traced to other than natural causes, all the immediate attendants of the Dauphiness began to question each other upon the several incidents which had preceded the attack; when it was suddenly remembered, that on the evening of the 5th, when the

Princess was compelled to retire to bed, she had expressed a desire to relieve her head by having recourse to the powerful snuff of the Duke of Noailles, and directed one of her ladies of honour to bring the box. The Duchess of Lude had obeyed; but she sought throughout the closet in vain—the box had disappeared; another and another lady pursued the search, but with the same result; and ultimately the Dauphiness, after expressing her disappointment, desired that no further notice should be taken of the circumstance, lest it should reach the ears of the King. Now, however, it flashed terrible conviction upon the minds of her attendants. The donor himself was above suspicion, for his ardent affection for the Dauphiness was well known; but there no longer existed a doubt among those who were in the secret, that, by whomsoever introduced, the poison under whose effects their beloved Dauphiness was now suffering had been conveyed in that fatal snuff. Still, however, they remained silent, lest by avowing the fact they should excite the displeasure of the Monarch against their mistress.

During the night of the 9th the Princess fell into a stupour, despite the fever which still continued to increase in violence, and only partially recovered her consciousness at short and infrequent intervals. Certain appearances upon her skin for a time indicated an attack of measles, but this hope vanished within four-and-twenty hours; and on the following day her condition was considered to be so hopeless, that it was intimated to her that it would be desirable to summon her confessor. This advice agitated and alarmed the Dauphiness, who had not apprehended danger, al-

though she at once consented to the proposition ; but as she deferred commanding his presence, he at length entered her chamber unbidden, and proceeded to prepare her for confession. As she heard his voice, she looked towards him, to signify that she understood his exhortation, but afterwards, to his great surprise, remained resolutely silent.

As it was evident that she was rapidly sinking, and equally apparent that from some inexplicable cause she felt unwilling to unburden her conscience to himself, the anxious ecclesiastic suggested to her that this was no moment for ceremony, and that, should his conjecture be a correct one, he implored her to name the individual whom she desired to see ; when she immediately indicated M. Bailly, a priest of the Versailles Mission. He was, however, absent ; and the Princess ultimately consented to receive a monk of the Order of St. Francis, named Noël, who was immediately summoned.

The repugnance evinced by Madame de Bourgogne to confer her last confidence upon her own confessor, to whom she had ever appeared greatly attached, produced an unpleasant impression on the minds of those about her, and created unfavourable surmises as to the nature of the secrets which she had shrunk from divulging, save to a stranger. Her wishes were, however, held sacred, and on the arrival of the new functionary, the Dauphin, who had never quitted her bedside since the moment in which he ascertained her danger, left the room in a state of mental agony, which, superadded to the fatigue that he had undergone, had prostrated his strength.

The confession occupied a considerable time, and at its close the monk forthwith administered extreme unction to his penitent, which he had scarcely done when the holy viaticum was announced, and the King hastened to meet it at the foot of the great staircase. When she had communicated, the Dauphiness requested that the service for the dying might be read ; but she was informed that her case was not yet altogether hopeless, and was advised to make an effort to sleep.

During this time a medical consultation had been held, and it was decided that the Princess should be bled in the foot, and in the event of the failure of this remedy, that an emetic should be subsequently administered—the whole science of medicine under Louis XIV. being comprised in these two operations, which, on this occasion, however, utterly failed in producing any amendment ; while on the succeeding day the disorder increased so rapidly that those around the invalid became thoroughly bewildered, and permitted every one who chose to enter her chamber, although the King was still seated near her bed. Towards the evening Louis XIV. was with difficulty prevailed upon to retire, and he had not reached the door of the palace when she expired. At the foot of the great staircase he was assisted into his carriage, drowned in tears, and so crushed by grief that he returned immediately to Marly with Madame de Maintenon, whose anguish was equal to his own ; while neither the one nor the other had courage to see the Dauphin before they left the house of death.

The decease of the young and amiable Princess in-



volved universal mourning, but none suffered so bitterly as her husband. Her apartment had been immediately above that of the Dauphin, who, when banished from the dying bed of the sufferer by the express command of the King, had passed hours of agony, listening to every sound ; but as those which were now to succeed would necessarily prove even more unendurable, he was at length prevailed upon to leave the palace, and at seven in the morning of the 13th he threw himself into his travelling-carriage and was conveyed to Marly, where he had scarcely strength to totter to his room. The King, who was immediately apprised of his arrival, hastened to weep with him over their mutual loss ; but he had no sooner looked attentively into his countenance, than he was startled at the change that the last two days, during which they had not met, had produced in his whole appearance, for his eyes were dilated and inflamed with an unnatural brilliancy, while his face was covered with livid stains. Louis XIV., alarmed by these fatal symptoms, with which he had unfortunately become too familiar, instantly summoned his physicians, who declared the Dauphin to be seriously indisposed, and advised him to lose no time in retiring to his bed. Their advice was followed, and once more the poor old King found himself surrounded by the terrors of another death-scene.

On the morrow the mysterious disease had made alarming progress, and the Prince announced his conviction that he was not destined to survive many days ; but this was so frightful an anticipation that his physicians refused to admit the possibility of such a result. On the 17th, however, his agony became so intense

that he declared his entrails were on fire, and during the ensuing night sent to request that the King would permit him to receive the Holy Communion in his chamber. This was conceded ; and at half-past seven he partook of the Sacrament, which he survived only one hour.

When the fatal truth was conveyed to the aged and heart-stricken Monarch, who sat on his velvet cushions in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, with his head bent down upon his breast, and his fingers tightly clasped over the hand of the Duke of Berri, who was seated at his feet, he flung his arms passionately about the neck of the young Prince, exclaiming in an accent of anguish which sounded like the last cry of despair —“ Alas, my son, you alone are now left to me ! ”

It was a terrible moment, and the heart of the Monarch sunk under the sense of his bereavement. He dared not look back upon the past, and he shuddered at the contemplation of the future. Death was about him on every side, smiting down the young and the great, and making his gilded palace at once a marvel and a mockery. None talked of consolation, for none knew whence it could come, and the gloom had fastened alike upon the hearts of all.

On the death of the Duke of Bourgogne, the title of Dauphin descended to his elder son, the Duke of Bretagne, but the name was destined to be unfortunate. This was the third son of the unhappy Prince who had borne the same designation. Two were already in their graves ; and only sixteen days after the decease of their father, the new Dauphin and his infant brother, the Duke of Anjou, sickened in their turn. The King

felt that the hand of God was outstretched against his house; and on the first announcement of this new misfortune, commanded that they should both be baptised upon the instant.

The Duke of Bretagne had just attained his fifth year, and the Duke of Anjou his second; and for a short time hopes were entertained that the attack might prove merely to be one of those transitory indispositions to which children are frequently subject. This error, however, was of brief duration, for on the second day the Duke of Bretagne breathed his last, and the same funeral car conveyed to the vaults of St. Denis the father, the mother, and the child.

The Duke of Bretagne had no sooner expired than the Duchess of Ventadour\* established herself at the bedside of his suffering brother, where, assisted by her women, she took the whole responsibility upon herself, resisted alike entreaties and menaces, and refused to allow the infant Prince either to be bled or to swallow any drug prescribed by the physicians. Fearing, moreover, that the rumours of poison which were daily gaining ground were only too well founded, she procured from a friend an antidote, which she had received from the Duke of Savoy, and by which her own life had been some time before preserved; and to this antidote, which she immediately administered to the Duke of Anjou, his escape from death was universally attributed.†

This opinion was the more feasible as the cry of

\* Mademoiselle d'Houdincourt, subsequently Duchess of Ventadour, and lady of honour to *Madame*.

† Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

poison had become general, and the unfortunate Dauphin had been so fully convinced of the nature of his malady, that it was ascertained he had sent, while upon his bed of death, to entreat the Monarch to be careful of his own life, and to avoid all contact with whatever did not reach him through sure and trustworthy hands. In this frightful conviction he had himself expired; and in this frightful conviction the Sovereign of a great nation, already bowed beneath the infirmities of age and the pressure of moral suffering, was destined to live on, powerless against the evil which was mowing down all he loved, and haunted by the apprehension that he might, in his turn, become its victim.

Nor was the outstretched hand of destruction yet withdrawn. On the 4th of May, 1714, after an illness of four brief days, the Duke of Berri, to whom, in his hour of bitter bereavement Louis XIV. had clung, as to the last prop of his declining age, expired under an exhibition of the same symptoms which had destroyed his brother. He had just attained his twenty-eighth year, and was the handsomest and the most amiable of the three sons of MONSEIGNEUR, but also the most ignorant, his preceptors never having succeeded in enabling him to do more than read and write—a fact which had the effect, when he had reached manhood, of rendering him so diffident that he never ventured to converse with any one save his most intimate friends, lest he should expose himself by the utterance of some absurdity.

Once more the fearful outcry which had already desolated France was heard; and this time its echo

penetrated not only throughout the Capital, but even into the provinces and foreign nations, which witnessed with terror and indignation the determined progress of a crime that threatened to leave the throne of France shorn of all natural support, and the last years of an aged Monarch isolated and hopeless.

Of the existence of poison in this case, also, no doubt could indeed remain; and although the French people, guided to such a suspicion by some unacknowledged but powerful influence, still continued to fasten the crime upon the Duke of Orleans, it is rendered probable by circumstances that in this instance it might have been justly traced to another hand. It is at least certain that a short period only before the death of the Prince, he had been outraged by the insolence of his wife's chamberlain, to a degree which had induced him to complain with considerable bitterness to the Duke of St. Simon, his friend and confidant, of the indignities to which he was exposed through her irregularities, to which his eyes had been at length reluctantly opened. In reply, St. Simon declared that his Royal Highness was too forbearing, and would do well to complain to the King of the disgrace which the Duchess was constantly entailing upon both herself and him; and this advice he followed up by placing in the hands of the dishonoured husband some letters of which he had become possessed, that had passed between Madame de Berri and her chamberlain, and among others, one in which she proposed to elope with him, together with his reply, wherein he declined to take a step that must inevitably ruin his fortunes.

The poor young Duke had no sooner glanced over the correspondence with a burning brow and a flashing eye, than he declared his determination forthwith to submit these documents to Louis XIV., and to demand an immediate separation from his guilty wife; but as the King was at the time at Rambouillet, and private business delayed M. de Berri's departure for a few hours, the Duchess was informed in the interval of the animated conversation which he had held with his confidant—a fact which she had no sooner ascertained, and combined with his recent departure for Rambouillet, than she instantly suspected the motive of his sudden visit to the Monarch, and ordering her carriage without the delay of a moment, she followed him with such speed that she arrived only a few minutes after him. These had, however, sufficed to afford the Prince time to display the damning proofs of her guilt, upon which he was already expatiating when Madame de Berri appeared.

"How is this, sir?" asked the King as she approached: "you talk to me of an elopement, and the Duchess is at Rambouillet!"

"What brings you here, madam?" demanded the Duke, angrily.

"I come, sir," replied the beautiful delinquent, so soon as she had calmly performed her salutations to the Monarch and Madame de Maintenon, "to reproach you for the discourtesy of not having desired me to accompany you in so agreeable a visit."

"You have lost all shame!" furiously exclaimed the outraged husband.

"Because I come alone?" asked the Duchess, with

an affectation of ingenuousness ; " you know I am not timid."

" Well might you be so, madam, nevertheless," gasped out the Prince, holding towards her the fatal letters which he still clutched in his trembling hand, " aware as you are that I here hold the proofs of your dishonour."

" You surely jest !" retorted the Duchess, with bitter irony ; " or it may be that the memory of your Royal Highness is deficient upon certain points. I believe that two years ago we entered into an arrangement to which I have remained faithful, while you violate it ; and yet you are the person who complain."

" Must I, then, shut my eyes to your disgraceful intrigues ?"

" I have been indulgent on this point to your Royal Highness."

" No more of this," interposed the King, indignantly ; " such recriminations are unbecoming to your rank, and in my presence."

" I only request of your Majesty to shut up my wife forthwith in a convent," cried the exasperated Duke.

" And I merely beg to suggest to you, sire, the expediency of consigning my husband on the instant to a lunatic asylum," was the contemptuous retort of the Duchess.

The words had, however, scarcely escaped her lips when she received a violent kick from the heavy travelling-boot of the Prince, which flung her into the arms of Madame de Maintenon ; and she had no sooner recovered the shock than, without one word



of leave-taking even to the Monarch, with a heightened colour, and a haughty step, she regained her carriage, and returned with all speed to Versailles.

"I may have received no physical injury," she remarked coldly, to one of the ladies of her household, who was endeavouring to find consolation for the insult in her bodily escape; "that is indeed possible; but the mark will remain *here*"—and she placed her hand upon her heart.

Meanwhile, Louis XIV., outraged by the disrespect with which his presence had been forgotten or disregarded by his grandson, had, in the first impulse of his displeasure, raised his cane to strike him; but already alarmed at his own violence, and blushing at the unmanly action of which he had been guilty towards a woman, the Duke of Berri hastily withdrew.

Mutual error rendered mutual forgiveness, or at least its semblance, essential both to M. and Madame de Berri; and, accordingly, the Duchess professed herself satisfied with the apology offered by his Royal Highness; while the King, glad to be so easily rid of an affair which had originally threatened a more serious result, affected to forget his own share of the affront.

On the 4th of May Louis XIV. held a wolf-hunt in the forest of Marly, and among those who followed the chase were the Duke and Duchess of Berri, both of whom were in high health and spirits. The run was a long one; and the Prince, with whom this was a favourite sport, having ridden hard, had become ultimately heated, and was perishing with thirst when he encountered the Duchess, of whom he inquired

whether she or some person of her suite could give him a draught of liquid of any description. The Duchess replied in the affirmative, and handed to him from the pocket of her carriage a small bottle in a red morocco case, in which, as she affirmed, she always carried a small quantity of exquisite ratafia, in the event of overfatigue. The Prince seized it with avidity, drained it to the last drop, declared it to be excellent, and returned the empty bottle to the Duchess.

"I am glad to have met you so opportunely," said Madame de Berri with a smile; and so they parted.

A few hours subsequently the grandson of Louis XIV. had breathed his last. \*

This extraordinary adventure, however, never became public, and suspicion still pointed towards the Duke of Orleans, who, when he proceeded to the palace to sprinkle the body of the Duke of Berri with holy water, was subjected, on his way, to the bitter insults of an exasperated populace, and heard, as he passed along, the most atrocious accusations heaped upon his head without restraint or measure. Many pointed towards him with outstretched fingers and dark threats, and the mob appeared to have difficulty in permitting him to pursue his journey without personal aggression. At the funeral these demonstrations were renewed with tenfold violence; and, in lieu of accents of sorrow, nothing was heard save menaces of vengeance; while so great was the public fury, that it was found necessary to take measures for his safety. In the neighbourhood of the Palais-Royal, before which the procession passed, the tumult became at

\* *Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.*

length so menacing, that for some moments a deed of violence was apprehended; but the sensation ultimately exhaled itself in execrations and abuse; and, meanwhile, the indignation of the courtiers, although more restrained, was not less marked. Few among them sought even to conceal the horror which they felt towards the Prince, and when he attempted to address them, turned away gloomily, inquiring one of the other, if so atrocious a crime were, indeed, destined to remain unpunished, or if justice would yet be done.

The same dark suspicion had gained even the King and Madame de Maintenon. In default of direct heirs, the Duke of Orleans became the rightful Sovereign of France, and this fact, combined with the knowledge that the unfortunate Prince was addicted to chemistry, and had even erected a laboratory, where, assisted by his chemist Homberg, he amused himself in experiments at that period at once extraordinary and, in the public estimation, closely allied to magic, sufficed to fasten upon him the accusation of the foulest murders.

Louis XIV. was sinking under the weight of years; the poisoned chalice appeared forever at his own lips; he was oppressed by the fearful mystery which enveloped him; and any light, however horrible, thrown upon the fatal occurrences of the last few years, seemed to his shrinking spirit preferable to the darkness by which he had been hitherto surrounded. He had supported the death of the Duke of Berri with a firmness which astonished all about him, and had commanded that the body of his grandson should not be opened, for he shuddered at a renewal of the horrors through which he had already passed; and the funeral

was no sooner performed than he terminated the mourning at Versailles.

The Court was at this juncture divided into two distinct parties. The one was composed of the Princes of the Blood, who were represented by the houses of Orleans, Condé, and Conti, and all those scions of pure and ancient race, who gloried in their ability to display, above the portals of their palaces and on the panels of their equipages, a shield unsullied by the bar of bastardy; and to these were attached the Dukes and Peers whose interests were involved in the same cause: while the opposite faction was that of the legitimated Princes, and consisted of the Duke of Maine, the Count of Toulouse, and the other natural children of the King; strengthened, moreover, by the influence of Madame de Maintenon, to whom they had extended a hope that she should yet become the recognised and acknowledged Queen of France. The first party based their claims upon their legal rights, and the second upon their acquired privileges.

The latter struck the first blow, and it was a heavy one. The Duke of Orleans became branded as an assassin.

The principal motive of this heartless and miserable calumny was to deprive the Prince of his right of regency during the minority of the Duke of Anjou, which must, should the plot prove successful, necessarily revert to the Duke of Maine; and Le Tellier, the confessor of Louis XIV., conscious of the undisguised hatred of the Prince towards the Jesuits, of whose order he was one of the most zealous representatives, lent himself without hesitation to the fac-

tion of the bastards; and thus, while the populace vented their invectives in the public streets against the Duke of Orleans, Le Tellier laboured, less audibly but even more effectively in the confessional; repeating without compunction to his august penitent, that the death of every Prince of the Royal house advanced his nephew one step nearer to the throne; expatiating upon his hidden studies as a work of destruction rather than of improvement, and compelling the harassed and bewildered Monarch to lend a quailing ear to the outcry of a bribed rabble, who, on seeing the Prince leave the palace, yelled out their execrations within the very hearing of their Sovereign.

The Duke of Orleans was, meanwhile, a prey to the most violent mental anguish. The Marquis de Canillac, one of his fastest friends, made his way on one occasion through the excited mob, and entered his apartment, where he found him extended upon the floor in a state of the most gloomy despair, from which his remonstrances were, for a considerable time, unable to arouse him; but once awakened from his stupor of agony, he declared his resolution to justify himself to the King.

His entrance was not forbidden, though the reception which he met was stern and cold; but the Prince had already suffered too much to be discouraged by a bent brow, and he hastened to inform the Monarch that he came as a suppliant, to entreat that he might be arrested and conveyed to the Bastille, to be forthwith put upon his trial. A smile of disdainful distrust settled upon the lip of Louis XIV. as he replied that he would not suffer so foul a subject to be made the

cause of further scandal to the public, and that the Duke would do so at his peril; adding that if he presented himself at the fortress, he should allow him to remain there.

The Prince then suggested that at least his chemist Homberg should be imprisoned, in order that by the evidence adduced upon his trial he might himself be justified; but the King, perplexed, uncertain, and irritated between the conflicting interests which he was called upon to judge, turned his back upon him before he had concluded his appeal, and left the apartment.

On his return to Paris the Duke ascertained that Homberg had surrendered himself, and was already a prisoner in the Bastille; and he had scarcely informed his family of the reception which he had experienced from the King, when he received a message from the chancellor, Pontchartrain, entreating him not to risk another personal appeal to the Sovereign, and pledging himself that he would immediately see the Monarch in his behalf, and represent the disastrous consequences which must inevitably accrue to the state from a trial involving the life of a Prince of the Blood Royal. The Duke of Orleans, by the advice of his friends, accepted this mediation, and accompanied by all the Princes and Princesses of his party, departed for St. Cloud, there to await the result of the King's interview with M. de Pontchartrain.

The almost Royal procession of the Princes, as they left the city, was so numerous, so noble, and so magnificent, that for once the Duke passed on unimpeded; and he had not long established himself at St. Cloud ere he received the welcome intelligence that, after a

long audience, in which the King had fully recognised his innocence, the Minister had received an order to liberate Homberg from his captivity.

Nevertheless, Louis XIV. never overcame his distrust of his brother's son ; and although in private he passed hours in his chair, with clasped hands and bent head, evidently absorbed by the most bitter reflections, he still possessed sufficient self-control to devour his grief in public, and continued as accessible as before. All these domestic miseries had fallen upon him at the close of a long and disastrous war, and at a time when his kingdom was the prey of famine : but still he strove to carry his head erect before his subjects, and to enact the Monarch to the last, however wretched might be his solitary moments. And they were wretched ; for he could not conceal from himself that at the very period in which he most needed support and consolation the affection of his people had become alienated by the disorder of the public finances, to which he could apply no remedy ; while his unbounded confidence in Père le Tellier, by whom it was abused, added to their discontent.

They had forgiven the errors of his manhood, but they could not pardon the weakness of his old age.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Maine exerted, in the name of the King, and through the influence of Madame de Maintenon, all the privileges of Royalty ; and had no longer a wish ungratified, save that the Regency should be wrested from the Duke of Orleans, and devolve upon himself.

It was far otherwise, however, with the Monarch, whose cup of bitterness was not yet full. The Duch-

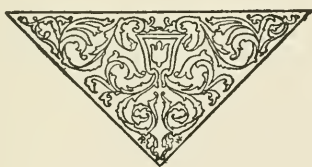


ess of Berri, now a widow, was the only legitimate Princess who remained of an age to preside over his Court, and her conduct from the first period of her marriage had been, as we have already stated, of the most revolting description. Fascinating in her conversation, but perfidious from a mere love of falsehood, she possessed no one virtue to redeem her many and unblushing vices. The pride which caused her upon every opportunity to insult her mother with the stain upon her birth, by which she was disabled from competing with herself, and her arrogance in assuming precedence of her upon every state occasion ; her contempt for her husband, whose mental deficiencies were daily the subject of her sarcasms, and the pertinacity with which she opposed his will, whenever he ventured to express it, were, unfortunately, only her minor defects ; and thus the stately Court of Anne of Austria, the punctilious circle of Maria Theresa, and the elegant society of the Duchess of Bourgogne, were, at the very period of his life when Louis XIV., at length disenchanted of the greatness, and disgusted with the vices of this world, was seeking to purify his heart and to exalt his thoughts, that they might become more meet for heaven, superseded by the orgies of a wanton, who, with unabashed brow, and unshrinking eye, carried her intrigues even into the very saloon of Marly.

The blood of Madame de Montespan had not belied itself.

Turn whithersoever he would, therefore, the unfortunate Monarch was surrounded by mortification, gloom, and disappointment ; and even his most inti-

mate circle, his most cherished retirement, was invaded by remorse and regret. He could not look forward; for even Louis XIV., at seventy-two, could not speculate upon a future, while the most glorious portions of the past were tainted by error, injustice, and ambition; and these vanished, what had remained? He could not reflect upon the sinister events of his reign, particularly of those which were yet recent, without becoming the victim of the most fearful and harassing suspicions. Richard in his war-tent never contemplated a train of more appalling shadows than those evoked by the memory of Louis XIV., as he sat, supported by cushions and pillowed upon velvet, in his sumptuous apartment. Henrietta of England, the Queen of Spain her daughter, the Dauphin, the fair and fond Duchess of Bourgogne and her child, and last of all the Duke of Berri, the sole prop left to that throne which must soon be empty, save a frail infant—such were the shapes that haunted his last reveries; and well might the pale old man in his solitary moments bend down the proud head which had no longer strength to bear a crown, and eschewing the arrogance of those years in which he had assumed the bearing of a demi-god, confess to his own heart that he was human.





## CHAPTER IX

Moral Lassitude of Louis XIV.—Indecision on the Question of the Regency—Persecutions of His Private Circle—The Duchess of Maine and Her Children ; They are Declared Eligible to Succeed to the Crown—Retirement of M. de Pontchartrain ; He is Succeeded by M. Voisin—Party Arguments—Council of Regency—The Will Concealed—Remorse of Louis XIV.—Reception of the Persian Ambassador—Illness of the King—Premature Despatches—Review of the Household Troops—Anxiety of the King to Conceal His Decay—Anxiety of the Duchess of Maine—A Marriage Refused—A Tardy Confidence—Last Hours of Louis XIV.—Was Louis XIV. a Jesuit?—Indifference of the Nation to His Death—A Parting Scene—Louis XIV. and His Successor—Madame de Maintenon and the Captain of the Body-Guard—Madame de Maintenon's Departure for St. Cyr—The Last Agony—Death of Louis XIV.—“ The King is Dead ! Long Live the King ! ”

IN such a state of moral lassitude as that by which Louis XIV. was now oppressed, he was little able to contend against the intrigues of an uncompromising faction ; and thus, although not blind to the interested views of those by whom he was persecuted to effect a measure repugnant alike to his principles and to his feelings, he gradually suffered himself to be persuaded, even if he could not be convinced, by the specious sophistry of their arguments. It is true that he had declared himself convinced of the innocence of the

Duke of Orleans of the foul charges which had been made against him; but the mystery was yet unsolved—that innocence was but presumptive; while, on the other hand, the immoral habits, atheistical principles, and reckless disposition of the Prince, were ill suited to the responsible position to which his birth had called him.

The Duke of Anjou was yet an infant; it was an existence as yet unformed, a heart and a mind yet to be shaped and fashioned, and, above all, it was a life to be preserved; a King to be reared to manhood, alike for his own nation and for all Europe; and as these things were daily murmured into his aching ears, despite himself he shuddered and he doubted.

Nevertheless the measure was one of such vital importance that the King still hesitated; and assured that this hesitation must be concluded by other means than those of persuasion, Madame de Maintenon became convinced that a systematic neglect, and the deprivation of that support which had hitherto been afforded with officious zeal to the dependent Monarch, would alone tend to make him conscious of his actual position. In accordance with this cruel policy, therefore, both the Duke of Maine and herself suddenly became silent, serious, and frequently even gloomy, never replying save when they were directly addressed, and then answering only in monosyllables. The great age of the King and his peculiar position not permitting him to seek amusement beyond his own immediate circle, he was consequently condemned to the monotonous routine of music and cards, which was now rendered doubly irksome by the want of that enlivening

conversation to which it had hitherto been indebted for its greatest charm ; and this privation was the more felt that he was now subjected to it for the first time. The ladies who habitually composed the society of Madame de Maintenon, and who were not in the secret of this new stratagem, strove for a time to raise her spirits, believing them to be depressed by some unacknowledged annoyance ; but they soon discovered that their zeal was unwelcome, and, embarrassed by a mystery which they could not fathom, they became in their turn taciturn and ill at ease ; and thus the Monarch found himself surrounded by an atmosphere of melancholy and constraint, which unnerved his mind and destroyed his energies.

The Duchess of Maine wielded, moreover, another weapon. When the old King caressed her children, she wept over them, and when he would have made them the companions of his drive, she hurried them away, not daring, as she declared, to exhibit them in public while so dark a stain rested upon their birth. At other times she affected to shrink from collision with the Duchess of Orleans, her sister, who, by her marriage with the nephew of the King, had effaced the stigma of her illegitimacy ; and when the aged Monarch, heart-wrung and weary, could bear no further pang, Madame de Maintenon soothed him by recalling to his recollection that he had but to will it, and these trials would be terminated forever.

Louis XIV. sighed for peace ; his strength was sapped by the perpetual murmurs to which he was exposed, and it was at length extorted from him, in one of those moments of moral exhaustion, that the chil-

dren of the Duke of Maine should be created Princes of the Blood, with all the prerogatives essential to that dignity, especially the privilege of succeeding to the crown in default of a direct and legitimate heir.\*

But although he suffered this concession to be forced from him, and found the immediate recompense of his compliance in the renewed attentions and gayety of his little circle, the King was nevertheless dissatisfied with himself; and in reply to the self-gratulatory acknowledgments of the Duchess of Maine, and the equally earnest but more measured thanks of her husband, he answered sadly, and even sharply, "You would have it so; and, therefore, should you find that, after having become great during my lifetime, you are reduced to insignificance after my death, remember that it has been your own work; and profit by what I have done, should it be in your power."

The Chancellor Pontchartrain no sooner ascertained the aim of this last intrigue than, pretexting his advanced age and failing health, he requested his dismissal, which was, after some difficulty, conceded, and his place supplied by M. Voisin,† who was devoted to the interests of Madame de Maintenon and the Duke of Maine. To him had been intrusted the delicate task of bringing the mind of the King to dwell upon a future in which he could bear no part; but it is doubtful that he would have succeeded in his aim, had not the domestic persecutions to which we have alluded come in aid of his diplomacy.

Throughout the whole of the transaction the word

\* Louis XIV., *sa Cour, et le Regent.*

† Son of a Councillor of State.

WILL. was never pronounced before Louis XIV.; he was entreated only to insure the observance of his *wishes*; nor was he fatigued even by the summary of these, for he had those about him who prompted every measure, reasoned upon its justice and validity, and combined the whole with a promptitude and sophistry which rendered all his objections of no avail. In vain did he declare that the birth of the Duke of Orleans entitled him to the Regency; he was answered by the suspicion of poison and the fact of profligacy: and when, with a return of his former pride, he declared that he could not brook that his last wishes should be disregarded, as those of his father had previously been, he was reminded of the vast discrepancy which had existed between Louis XIII. and Louis XIV., and assured that no one would dare to controvert his own pleasure to the end of time.

This avarice of power was the weak point of the Monarch; and at length, as we have stated, the victory was obtained. In the last document to which his signature was appended he established a Council of Regency, over which the Duke of Orleans was to preside, to which the Duke of Bourbon was to be called when he should have attained the age of twenty-four, and whose other members were to be the Duke of Maine, the Count of Toulouse, the Chancellor, four Marshals, the like number of Secretaries of State, and the Controller-General.

In this Council every measure was to be decided by a majority of voices; but that of the President was to have weight only when he had the casting vote, while the person of the infant Monarch was



to be placed under the government of the collective members.

Moreover, the Duke of Maine was intrusted, not only with the education, but also with the safe-keeping of the young King, with absolute control over the body-guard; and, in case of his decease, the same privileges were to descend to the Count of Toulouse; while the Duke-Marshal of Villeroy was appointed Governor, under the authority of the Duke of Maine. This arrangement, as will be perceptible at the first glance, left to the Duke of Orleans no power save what was secured to him by law, while even that was burdened with precautions well calculated to excite his indignation.\*

The Royal will was no sooner completed than it was concealed in a cavity opened in the wall of a tower behind the state apartment, where it was inclosed within an iron door protected by three different keys, one of which was delivered to the first President of the Chambers, a second to the Attorney-General, and the third to the Public Registrar. It was, moreover, accompanied by an edict which forbade it to be opened before the death of the King, and then only in the presence of the assembled Parliament, the Princes, and the Peers.

As Louis XIV. placed these documents in the hands of the President, he said, gloomily, " Here is my will. The example of the Kings, my predecessors, and even that of the King, my father, will not allow me to remain in ignorance of what may happen to it; but it

\* *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire Universelle de l'Europe*, par le Père d'Avrigny.

has been solicited; I have been tormented to frame it, and I have been allowed neither peace nor rest till I complied. I have, therefore, purchased comfort through its means. Take it away. Happen to it what may, at least I shall now be left quiet, and hear no more upon the subject."\*

This incident will suffice to demonstrate the persecutions to which Louis XIV. was subjected during the later period of his existence; but, despite his private annoyances, he continued resolutely to hold the helm of government, and, the more deeply he became conscious of his physical weakness, the more determined and extraordinary were his efforts to preserve the interests of the state firm and intact.

The last occasion on which Louis XIV. appeared in all the pomp of his regality was at the reception of Mehemet-Riza-Beg, the *soi-disant* Persian Ambassador. The most magnificent preparations were made for the ceremonial of the apocryphal envoy, and the dignified and venerable appearance of the grey-haired but still stately Monarch excited universal comment and admiration. The departure of the Ambassador was, however, the signal for renewed monotony; and this brief interval of splendour and representation past, the King resumed his usual habits, occupied himself in forming treaties and renewing alliances, arranged his papers with scrupulous exactness, burned such as he did not desire should be made public, and even dictated certain minute details connected with the ceremonial to be observed towards the Dauphin.

On the 3d of May, 1715, Louis XIV. rose at an

\* Mémoires de St. Simon.

early hour in order to witness an eclipse of the sun, and having attentively observed it in all its phases, he complained, towards the evening, of extreme fatigue. Nevertheless he supped in the apartment of the Duchess of Berri; but, feeling weary and exhausted, left the table and immediately retired to bed. A rumour forthwith spread that the King was seriously indisposed, and the report gained ground so rapidly that the several Foreign Ambassadors despatched couriers to their respective Courts to announce the intelligence—a circumstance which soon reached the ears of the Monarch, who, indignant at such indecent precipitancy, and resolving to prove that he was yet superior to the decay on which they based their faith, commanded that preparations should be forthwith commenced for a grand review of his household troops.

This magnificent exhibition consequently took place on the 20th of June, when, for the last time, the several troops of gendarmes and light-horse, in their state uniforms, defiled in front of the terrace of Marly, which they had no sooner done than the Monarch appeared at the principal entrance of the palace, habited in the same costume which he had worn in his earlier years, and descending the marble steps, mounted his horse, and remained four hours in the saddle under the eyes of the foreign envoys, who had already announced his approaching death to their Sovereigns.

This, however, was the expiring effort of his pride. A short time subsequently the Court returned to Versailles; and on the eve of the festival of St. Louis the King dined in public; but his evident exhaustion, and

the change which had taken place in his countenance, betrayed the violent struggles to which he had subjected himself in order to conceal his rapidly approaching decay. The repast had scarcely concluded when he complained of indisposition, and in another hour he was attacked by fever.

During the whole of the last year it had been the study of Louis XIV. to deceive himself, and above all, to deceive others, as to the extent of the physical debility induced by his great age. He had risen at a late hour, in order to curtail the fatigues of the day; received his Ministers, and even dined, in his bed; and once having prevailed upon himself to leave it, passed several hours in succession in his cushioned chair. It was in vain that his physician urged upon him the necessity of exercise, in order to counteract his tendency to revery and somnolency, and equally in vain that he reminded him of the swollen and discoloured state of his feet and ankles; the invalid admitted the justice of his arguments, but the system which he so zealously advocated alarmed the increasing indolence of the Monarch, who could not rise from his seat without pain, and would never attempt to do so until all his attendants had left the room, lest they should perceive the state of weakness to which he was reduced.

Great, therefore, had been the two efforts which we have described, where the Monarch had for a time conquered the man, and where pride had supplied the place of strength. The only exercise which he ultimately consented to take was in the magnificent gardens of Versailles, where he was wheeled through the stately avenues which he had himself planted, in a

bath-chair, a prey to pain, which was visibly depicted upon his countenance, but which he supported with cold and silent dignity, too haughty to complain. To the last he wore rouge, preserved the symmetry of his figure by artificial means, and even studied to observe the same style of walk and gesture which he had adopted during the elasticity of youth.\*

Although, as we have shown, the faction of the legitimatised Princes had succeeded in wresting from Louis XIV. a will favourable to their interests, they were, nevertheless, not suffered to inform themselves of its precise contents, and had consequently only a general impression of its tendency; and so long as the Monarch remained in health this imperfect knowledge had sufficed to satisfy them; but they had no sooner ascertained that he was, in all probability, upon his deathbed, than the Duchess of Maine urged her husband to explain to Madame de Maintenon the vital necessity of their comprehending, not only in its full but also in its most minute bearings, the whole bent and nature of the document, in order that they might adopt such measures as should appear the most prudent under the circumstances in which they were about to be placed.

This necessity was at once admitted by their counsellor; but when the Duke proceeded to entreat that she would obtain the desired information from the Monarch, Madame de Maintenon hesitated. To assail his sick-bed with such a request appeared to her a certain method of incurring his displeasure; and she shrank from involving herself in so gratuitous a risk.

\* Versailles Ancien et Moderne.

The urgency of M. du Maine, however, bore down this objection. He declared that at such a moment it would be impossible for the King to have any feeling save one of tenderness towards a person of whose devotion he had during so many years had daily and hourly proofs; and at length reassured by this argument, and unable to resist the pleading of her favourite friend and pupil, she consented to make the attempt.

Skilfully, however, as Madame de Maintenon seized her opportunity, the King was startled by the inquiry. He was conscious that in his tenderness for his illegitimate children, he had already in a great degree overpassed the boundary of justice, and all that could be extorted from him was his consent to inform them of what they desired to know only on the express condition that they would pledge themselves to keep it a profound secret, and would adopt no measures in consequence.

As the Royal compliance was rendered nugatory by these restrictions, the Duke of Maine considered it prudent to decline the confidence, but he ere long repented his decision; and as it was impossible to repair the error, it was next decided that the faction should limit their inquiries to the simple fact of the succession, and entreat the King to inform them whether or not he had decided that it should devolve upon the King of Spain.

This question he answered in the negative, whence they inferred that the Duke of Orleans must necessarily hold a prominent position, be it what it might, under the regency; yet they declined the advances

which, in complete ignorance of the success of the intrigue, he had recently made towards a reconciliation, and even evaded an alliance, at which he more than hinted, between Mademoiselle de Valois, his daughter, and the Prince de Dombes, the elder son of the Duke of Maine. It is true that the King, when it was mooted, showed some disinclination to the proposed marriage, which they made no effort to remove; while the suggestion also involved certain minor difficulties that were permitted to outweigh its obvious advantages.

To this fault they added another infinitely more serious, by informing the Duke of Orleans that there was no mention made of Philip V. in the Royal will—an assurance which, thanks to their own indiscretion, at once convinced the Prince of the stability of his position.

As the fatal indisposition of Louis XIV. progressed, and the extreme languor under which he suffered convinced all around him that he was rapidly drawing near his end, the alarm of the Duchess of Maine augmented, and she once more assailed Madame de Maintenon with entreaties that she would induce the King to speak without reserve, and also to adopt the most stringent measures to insure to the legitimatised Princes, beyond all risk of failure, the privileges to which they had attained.

On this occasion, however, Madame de Maintenon met her request with a resolute refusal, and declared her determination to resist every attempt which might be made to disturb and embitter his last moments; and it was consequently freely, and without sollicita-



tion, that the Monarch ultimately imparted to the Duke of Maine all the clauses of the will. In vain did the bewildered listener expostulate with him upon the difficulties to which he should be exposed by such an arrangement; in vain did he assure him that he had invested him with an authority which, while it was sufficiently great to secure to him the animosity of the Duke of Orleans, was still too limited to support him against his resentment; the King resisted all his arguments, and persisted in declaring that he would not alter in anywise the arrangements that he had made. \*

There can indeed be little doubt that in the endeavour to aggrandise the Duke of Maine, Louis XIV. had adopted measures eminently calculated to frustrate his object. He might have foreseen that, in subjecting his nephew to the trammels of a council of regency, he should, as a natural consequence, excite his indignation, and impel him to attempt every expedient, however extreme, to liberate himself from such a thralldom; and he had long had sufficient experience of the hot and reckless nature of the Duke of Orleans, whose habit of resisting every intrusion upon his individual privileges was little likely to desert him in a conjuncture which involved alike his power and his pride, not only in his own eyes but in the eyes of all Europe, to have convinced him that the Prince would not tamely brook so glaring an affront; nor can his self-delusion, in framing such a will, be explained in any other manner than by the inference, that, having been implicitly obeyed throughout his life, he deemed it impossible that his wishes should be opposed when

\* Louis XIV., *sa Cour, et le Regent.*

he was in his grave, forgetting that he had himself disregarded the dying injunctions of his own father.

Return we to the suffering Monarch. On the day succeeding his attack, the King declared himself considerably recovered, and commanded a concert, during which the musicians were instructed to play none but cheerful melodies ; and they had already ascended the orchestra, when the tapestry hangings of the Royal chamber, which had been drawn back, were suddenly closed, and the Court physicians were summoned, who declared the condition of the King to be so precarious that expresses were immediately despatched to his Confessor and the Cardinal de Rohan, who both arrived in great haste at a moment when the danger of dissolution appeared so immediate, that while Le Tellier was receiving the confession of his illustrious penitent, the Cardinal hurried to the chapel in search of the viaticum, and sent to desire the immediate attendance of the Curate with the holy oils.

Two of the King's almoners summoned by the Cardinal, a few of the inferior domestics of the palace bearing torches, two of the physician's private servants, and lastly Madame de Maintenon, were all who followed the pyx to the Royal Chamber, by a private staircase ; and not more than a dozen individuals surrounded the dying-bed, where the Cardinal expatiated to the expiring Monarch upon the importance and solemnity of this great and closing ceremony.

The aged King listened firmly, and with an expression of pious devotion, and when he had received the sacrament, and touched the holy oils, all who had been present left the chamber, save the Chancellor and

Madame de Maintenon; and they had no sooner retired than a small table was placed beside him, upon which he wrote a few lines comprising a last codicil in favour of the Duke of Maine; and, this done, fell back upon his pillow, in apparent tranquillity.

On the 22d of August mortification had taken place in one of his legs, and the Duke of Orleans, whose saloons had for some time been totally deserted, found himself suddenly the centre of a brilliant circle; but an empiric, who declared himself capable of renewing the strength of the King with an elixir of which he alone possessed the secret, and who succeeded in inducing his attendants to test its efficacy, having so far renovated him that he was enabled to swallow a small portion of food, and moreover declared that he would in time restore him to health, the crowd by whom the Prince had been surrounded was so materially diminished, that as he glanced round his saloon he said, disdainfully, "Let him but make another meal, and I shall find myself alone."

The disease was, however, mortal. This last hope proved fallacious, and the King felt that he was beyond the power of human help. In his extremity he devoted himself entirely to prayer, and his tranquillity was so great that it was attributed to the rash and unmeasured assurances of his confessor. It was asserted that Anne of Austria had on one occasion exhorted him rather to strive to emulate his grandfather than his father, and when he had inquired wherefore, had replied, "Because at the death of Henry IV. the nation wept, but at that of Louis XIII. it smiled." This, however, it was generally conceded, could not be

the memory by which his dying pillow was now smoothed ; for after a reign of seventy-two years, and an existence of seventy-seven, sullied by the vices of his early life, so many wars recklessly undertaken, so many human lives sacrificed, so many taxes inflicted on an already burdened people, it could not be that the anticipation of the tears and lamentations of his subjects gave him this calm, and taught him to look with fearlessness upon his extinction.

The solution of the enigma was consequently supposed to exist in a report which had for some time been whispered at Court, to the effect that, a considerable period before his illness, Père le Tellier had induced the King to become a member of the fraternity of the Jesuits, of which he had vaunted the privileges and plenary indulgences, and had even succeeded in persuading him that whatever might be the sins of which he had been guilty, or in whatever impossibility he found himself of making reparation in this world to those whom he might have injured, the simple fact of his becoming a brother of the Company of Jesus would suffice for his complete exoneration, and infallibly induce his salvation.

Such assurances as these could not, as it was declared, have failed in their effect upon a conscience heavily burdened, and only newly awakened to a sense of its condition ; and, accordingly, it was asserted that the King had taken the vows required of him, and instead of the habit of the order, had been invested with a minute sign of his confraternity, in the shape of a scapulary, which he wore upon his breast ; while certain prayers and pledges which throughout the last

days of his existence were exchanged between himself and his confessor, and which, having been partially overheard, were not recognised as the religious exercises commonly used before death, served to confirm the opinion that Louis XIV. was indeed, at that period, a Jesuit.

The Duke of St. Simon, however, even while recording this suspicion, proceeds to throw a doubt upon its truth, by adding, that as his own curiosity was excited upon the subject, he inquired in confidence of Maréchal, the King's principal surgeon, to whom he was much attached, and from whom he had few secrets, if such indeed were the case; when he was positively assured that the report had no foundation whatever, and even detesting Le Tellier as he did, Maréchal yet declared that although he was near the King at all hours of the day and night, he had never remarked the use of any particular formulary of prayer or benediction; while, as regarded the adoption of the scapulary, or any other badge, he could positively declare that the King wore nothing about his person save the relics which he had carried for years.

Calm as he appeared, moreover, Louis XIV. nevertheless bitterly expiated upon his deathbed the faults and excesses of his past life. He wept over the profligacy of his youth, which he publicly avowed; deplored the madness of his ambition, by which he had brought mourning into every corner of his kingdom, and expressed the most earnest regret that sufficient time had not been afforded to him, since the termination of the war, to leave to his grandson a flourishing nation and a happy people.

That he had failed to do so was evident throughout his illness. The excessive burden of taxation, the fluctuating currency, and the discontent of the Parliament, which he had subjected to slight and insult throughout the whole duration of a protracted reign, had induced every class of his subjects to look forward with anxiety to its close; while even at Court, the wearisomeness and constraint that had prevailed since the deaths of the Duke and Duchess of Bourgogne diminished, in a very perceptible degree, the anxiety which they would otherwise have undoubtedly evinced.

Some few, however, wept at the prospect of losing their Monarch; but these were they who had grown old with him, and must necessarily see themselves thrust aside to make way for a new race; those whose ideas and habits were alike becoming antediluvian, and who could not conceal even from themselves, that they were little fitted to figure in a Court, which would be ruled by a dissipated Regent, and a King who had not yet attained to boyhood. Not even his successor mourned over the approach of a separation which must be eternal, for he was yet too young to comprehend the extent of the loss to which he was about to be subjected by the failure of that protection which would have been his best security; while the Duke of Orleans looked forward to the demise of his almost octagenarian uncle as a release from restraint and mortification.

Nor were the children of Louis XIV.—those children to forward whose worldly interests he had forfeited his own sense of right—more earnest in their grief; the Princess of Conti indeed exhibited sorrow,



but it was placid and resigned; the Duchess of Bourbon talked of her affliction, but pursued her intrigues as usual; while the Duchess of Orleans shed showers of those painless tears which were, with her, ever ready upon any occasion of annoyance or expediency. The Duke of Maine, it is true, struggled to compose a countenance of decent grief; but he wore the mask loosely, and deceived no one, while the Count of Toulouse preserved a cold and undemonstrative deportment which forbade one suspicion of regret.\*

Madame de Maintenon had at this period reached her eightieth year, and at so advanced an age might have been more readily acquitted, had she suffered her physical weakness to overpower her moral faculties; but such was far from being the case. To her Louis XIV. was everything on earth; in him her affections, her ambition, and her hope had alike been concentrated, and she appeared to have garnered up all her energies, in order that she might be supported through the fearful trial which was so rapidly approaching. Watchful, anxious, and unwearying, she sat beside the death-pillow of her Monarch husband; he who had loved her well enough for himself, but not sufficiently for his pride—who had readily made her his wife, but who had shrunk from making her his Queen.

“My grief is great,” she said to one who attempted consolation, “but it is calm and unembittered. I shall weep for him often, but my tears will be those of affection rather than regret, for, in the depth of my heart, his truly Christian end will give me joy.” †

\* *Mémoires de St. Simon.*

† *Mémoires de la Beaumelle.*



Her watch was frequently shared by the Duke-Marshal of Villeroy, to whom the Monarch was greatly attached, and towards the close of his existence, having called him to his side, he said, firmly,

“ Marshal, I feel that I am dying ; when all is over, conduct your new master to Vincennes, and cause my wishes to be observed.” Then, having sent to summon the Duke of Orleans, as the Prince approached his bed he made a signal to those who were about him to retire, which they had no sooner done than he conversed with his nephew for a considerable time in so low a voice that no portion of the conversation could be overheard. After his death, however, the Duke affirmed that in this last interview the King had expressed himself in terms of affection and confidence, and had assured him that, by the dispositions contained in his will, he had preserved to him inviolably the rights of his high birth ; adding, that should the Dauphin not survive to claim the crown, it would become his own, and that under these circumstances he had endeavoured to act with judgment ; but that, as it was impossible to foresee the result, should anything have been ill-arranged, it would without doubt be remedied.

When the Duke of Orleans retired, the King desired the presence of the Duke of Maine, with whom he spoke apart for a shorter period, after which he received the Count of Toulouse ; and subsequently the Princes of the Blood collectively ; to whom, however, he addressed merely a few words, and even those were uttered in a sufficiently audible voice to be heard by all who were in attendance.

On the 26th of August, the King dined in his bed, when all were admitted who had the privilege of the *entrées*; and as the attendants were preparing to retire at the close of his repast, he desired them to draw nearer, and then said, with emotion,

"Gentlemen, I desire your pardon for the bad example which I have set you. I have greatly to thank you for the manner in which you have served me, as well as for the attachment and fidelity which I have always experienced at your hands. I request from you the same zeal and the same fidelity towards my grandson, in order that your example may induce those of all my other subjects. Farewell, gentlemen; I feel that this parting has affected not only myself, but you also. Forgive me. I trust that you will sometimes think of me when I am gone."

The scene was a touching one: the grey-haired King, half lying, half sitting, in his gorgeous bed, whose velvet hangings, looped back with their heavy ropes and tassels of gold, were the laborious offering of the pupils of St. Cyr, and were wrought with threads of gold and silver, and party-coloured silks, representing, in a singular and incongruous mixture the principal passages of the Scriptures, interspersed with the less holy incidents of the heathen mythology; the groups of Princes in their gorgeous costumes, dispersed over the vast apartment; the door opening from the cabinet thronged with courtiers and ladies; and, finally, the Court functionaries, who had simultaneously sunk upon their knees as they approached the dying Monarch; the gilded cornices, the priceless tapestried hangings, the richly-carpeted floor, the

waste of luxury on every side, the pride of man's intellect and of man's strength ; and in the midst decay and death, a palsied hand, and a dimmed eye.

The most stoical were moved at such a moment ; and even when the attendant gentlemen had risen slowly and in silence, and disappeared across the threshold, like a procession of shadows, the stillness of the death-room continued for a time unbroken.

It was the voice of the King by which it was at length dispelled. He first informed the Marshal of Villeroy that he had appointed him Governor to the Dauphin ; and then desired that the Duchess of Ventadour would introduce the child who was soon to become his successor ; and the little Prince had no sooner knelt upon the cushion which had been placed for him near the side of the bed, still holding the hand of his *gouvernante* firmly grasped in his own, than the Monarch, after gazing upon him for a time with an expression of mingled anxiety and tenderness, said, in an impressive voice,

“ My child, you are about to become a great King ; do not imitate me either in my taste for building or in my love of war. Endeavour, on the contrary, to live in peace with the neighbouring nations ; render to God all that you owe him, and cause his name to be honoured by your subjects. Strive to relieve the burdens of your people, in which I have been unfortunate enough to fail ; and never forget the gratitude that you owe to Madame de Ventadour.”\*

\* Louis XV. caused the last words addressed to him by his Royal grandfather to be inscribed on vellum ; and it is stated that throughout his life they were attached to the headcloth of his bed.

"Madame," he continued, addressing himself to the Duchess, "permit me to embrace the Prince."

The Dauphin was lifted into his arms ; and after he had clasped him fondly to his breast, he said, in a less steady voice,

"I bless you, my dear child, with all my heart."

This done, Madame de Ventadour was about to reclaim her charge, but the King did not relax his hold, until, raising his eyes to Heaven, he had repeated his solemn benediction.

On the 27th, the King, having commanded all the great dignitaries and officers of the household to meet in his apartment, addressed them in a firm voice, in the presence of Madame de Maintenon and his confessor, saying,

"Gentlemen, I die in the faith and obedience of the Church. I know nothing of the dogmas by which it is divided ; I have followed the advice that I received, and have done only what I was desired to do. If I have erred, my guides alone must answer before God, whom I call upon to witness this assertion."

Towards the afternoon Louis XIV. next desired the attendance of the Chancellor, to whom he delivered a casket filled with papers, a portion of which he instructed him to burn, giving distinct instructions for the disposal of the remainder : and, in the course of the evening, he sent for M. de Pontchartrain, who still acted as one of the Secretaries of State, and when he appeared, said, calmly,

"So soon as I am dead, you will be good enough to issue an order that my heart may be conveyed to the Church of the Jesuits in Paris, and cause it to be













placed there precisely in the same manner as that of my deceased father."

Then, after a pause, he continued, in a tone of equal placidity,

"When I shall have breathed my last, and that my death has been announced according to custom from the balcony of the state apartment, conduct *the King* to Vincennes. But as it strikes me that Cavoie has never regulated the distribution of the rooms in that castle, where the Court have not resided for the last fifty years, in the casket"—(and as he spoke the dying Monarch indicated one with his finger)—"you will find a plan of the apartments of Vincennes; take it, and carry it to the Grand-Marshal of the palace, in order that it may assist him in his arrangements."

The night which succeeded was restless and agitated, and was entirely passed by the Monarch in prayer; and on the morning of the 28th, immediately that he awoke, the physicians proposed to amputate the leg in which mortification had commenced.

"Will the operation prolong my life?" was the composed inquiry.

"Yes, sire," replied the head surgeon; "certainly, for several days; and perhaps even for several weeks."

"If that be all," said Louis XIV., "the result will not be adequate to the suffering. God's will be done!"

On the morning of the 30th the strength of the King was nearly exhausted.

"All is well-nigh over," he said feebly to the Marshal of Villeroy, who stood at his bedside; "farewell, my friend, we must soon part."

The courage of the dying Monarch never forsook

him for an instant ; neither did he exhibit the slightest emotion. He took leave of every member of his family with a dry eye and a steady voice, merely exhorting them to live, if possible, on terms of friendship, to do their duty to the young King, and to conduct themselves in a Christian spirit ; nor was it until the Princes and Princesses had withdrawn that he at length betrayed a slight degree of feeling as he turned towards Madame de Maintenon, saying,

“ At this moment I only regret yourself. I have not made you happy ; but I have ever felt for you all the regard and affection which you deserved. My only consolation in leaving you,” he added, as he grasped her hand, and gazed fixedly upon her with his dim and failing eyes, “ exists in the hope that we shall ere long meet again in eternity.”

Madame de Maintenon made no rejoinder ; but she soon after rose to leave the apartment, and as she crossed the threshold, exclaimed, as if unconsciously, “ A pretty rendezvous he has given me ! That man has never loved any one but himself.” And this equally imprudent and ill-timed ejaculation was overheard by the King’s apothecary, by whom it was repeated.\*

As she retired, the King saw in an opposite mirror the reflection of two of his valets-de-chambre, who were weeping bitterly. “ Why do you shed tears ? ” he asked. “ Did you, then, imagine that I was immortal ? As for myself, I never believed that such was the case, and you should have been prepared, at my age, to lose me long ago.”

\* Chroniques de l’Œil de Bœuf.

After a time the King exhibited extreme uneasiness at the absence of Madame de Maintenon, who, believing that all would shortly be over, had already departed for St. Cyr; but having been informed that her presence was required, she excused herself when she reappeared by stating that she had been uniting her prayers for his recovery with those of her pupils. On the 30th, however, the intellect of the Monarch had become so much impaired that she again left his side, and retired to her own apartment, whither she was followed, to her extreme annoyance, by the Captain of the Body-Guard. Her first care was to lock some papers, which she selected from among others in a bureau, into a small casket, in order to remove them; but this measure was resolutely opposed by M. de Cavoie, who informed her that he had received an order from the Duke of Orleans to take possession of all the papers in the apartments frequented by the King. "Shall I at least be permitted, sir," she asked, after an instant of indignant silence, "to remove my furniture?"

"Everything, madam," was the reply, "save what is the property of the Crown."

"The orders with which you have been intrusted, sir," said Madame de Maintenon, more and more incensed, "are somewhat bold; the King is not yet dead, and if Providence should see fit to restore him to us, you may have cause to regret their so stringent execution."

"If Providence should indeed prolong the life of his Majesty, madam," answered M. de Cavoie, with a profound bow, "we must hope that he will recognise his

real friends, and approve the conduct they have pursued." And then, after a brief pause, he added, "If you wish to return to the King's chamber you are at liberty to do so; but if not, I have orders to accompany you to St. Cyr."

Madame de Maintenon started; and then, without vouchsafing any reply, she hastily divided her furniture among her servants, and departed for St. Cyr, under the escort of Cavoie.

Once during the illness of the Monarch he had been betrayed into the expression, "When I was King;" and the scene which we have just described proved that he had not been premature in separating the present from the past.

On arriving at the convent, Madame de Maintenon was instantly made conscious, by the altered manner of the superior, that although the Monarch had not yet expired, her own reign was over. "Sir," demanded the Abbess of M. de Cavoie, when she had greeted her visitor with a cold and distant bow, "shall I not compromise myself and my community by receiving Madame de Maintenon without the permission of the Duke of Orleans?"

"Madam," exclaimed the Captain of the Guard, with generous indignation, "have you, then, forgotten that Madame de Maintenon was the foundress of this house?"

M. de Cavoie had no sooner retired than the widowed favourite desired that her pupils might be sent to her, and as they appeared, she said, emphatically, "Henceforth I will belong wholly to my God, and my children;" and then turning towards one of the nuns

to whom she was much attached, she added, "I have seen the King meet his death like a saint and a hero; I have quitted a world I never loved, and I am in a retreat which is most dear to me. I wish, with all my heart, that others were as happy as myself." Even at this bitter crisis the consummate tact and self-control of Madame de Maintenon did not abandon her.

The following day was one of agony to the expiring King. His intervals of consciousness were rare and brief. The mortification extended rapidly, and towards midday his condition became so much exasperated that it was found necessary to perform the service for the dying without further delay. The mournful ceremony aroused him from his lethargy, and the surprise was general when his voice was once more heard, audibly and clearly, combined with those of the priests. At the termination of the prayers he moreover recognised the Cardinal de Rohan, and said, calmly, "These are the last favours of the Church."

He then repeated several times, "*Nunc et in horâ mortis*;" and finally he exclaimed, with earnest fervour, "Oh, my God, come to my aid, and hasten to help me!"

He never spoke again; for as these words escaped him he once more fell back insensible upon his pillow, and throughout the night continued unconscious of everything save bodily suffering.

At eight o'clock on the following morning Louis XIV. expired. As he exhaled his last sigh, a man was seen to approach a window of the state apartment which opened on the great balcony, and throw it suddenly back. It was the Captain of the Body-Guard,

who had no sooner attracted the attention of the populace, by whom the courtyard was thronged in expectation of the tidings which they knew could not be long delayed, than raising his truncheon above his head, he broke it in the centre, and throwing the pieces among the crowd exclaimed, in a loud voice, "The King is dead!" Then seizing another staff from an attendant, without the pause of an instant, he flourished it in the air as he shouted, "Long live the King!"

And a multitudinous echo from the depths of the lately-deserted apartment answered as buoyantly, "Long live the King!"

THE END







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